



THE DIFFICULTIES  
OF  
ARMINIAN METHODISM:

A SERIES OF LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO BISHOP SIMPSON, OF PITTSBURGH.

BY  
WILLIAM ANNAN,  
AUTHOR OF "LETTERS ON PSALMODY," &c.

FIFTH EDITION.

"The prejudice against religious controversy is irrational and hurtful."—*Dr. J. M. Mason.*

"The truth is usually elicited by conflict. Agreement is the result."—*Prof. Hodge.*

"The evils of controversy are transient: the good it produces is permanent."—*Robert Hall.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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IN conversation a number of years ago with an esteemed friend, the Rev. (now Dr.) JAMES LINN, of Bellefonte, Pa. the preparation of this work was first suggested. Three editions having been favorably received by the Christian public, the writer has been induced by the solicitations of honored brethren, to issue in an enlarged, and he hopes, improved form, a fourth edition.

The work has not only been carefully revised, but in a great measure *re-written*. Every where the argument has been extended, and he trusts, *strengthened*, especially by quotations from leading Arminian authorities. The Letter on "Imputed Righteousness" is entirely new, being necessary to complete the investigation of the "Difficulties of Arminian Methodism." It has been the aim of the author to make his book, as far as possible, a full and satisfactory *expose* of the polemical *weaknesses* of modern Arminianism. For this end he has gone to the fountains, to the accredited authorities of Episcopal Methodism. It has been his earnest desire to make her best and ablest writers speak for themselves. In connection with Arminian errors, he has also given a concise statement of revealed truth.

An entirely new feature in the re-construction of this work, is the review of the "Objections to Calvinism," a work highly eulogized by Bishop Simpson, of Pittsburgh. This book has been constantly by our side, its most important and objectionable characteristics have been fairly stated, and if we mistake not, fully invalidated; and in not a few instances, we trust, logically *thrown back* upon its author and indorsers.

In reading these "Objections to Calvinism," and indeed in every other work from the same general source, we are constantly reminded of Bishop Horsley's advice to his clergy, in his last charge: "Take special care," said he, "in aiming your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what Calvinism is, \* \* \* and that you can distinguish that which belongs to our common Christianity." It is a curious circumstance, that in the "Refutation of Calvinism," one of his brother bishops, Tomline of Lincoln, assailed "Justification by Faith," as one of the *monstrous doctrines* of the Calvinistic theology! For this

*fact we have the authority of the "Edinburgh Encyclopedia," Art. Calvinism. Well might the late Dr. Miller, of Princeton, say, that "no system was ever more grossly misrepresented or more foully vilified," and "that it would be difficult to find a writer or speaker who has opposed it, who has fairly represented the system, or who really appeared to understand it."\** We fear the modern Bishop (at Pittsburgh), and Mr. Foster, whom he indorses, must fall under the same condemnation.

According to these authors, Calvinism is justly chargeable with “unaccountable and horrid teachings,” “revolting and shameful deformities,” “inculcates licentiousness and recklessness, licenses crime;” “a man may become during life *a devil in sin*, but he cannot miss of heaven;” “endangers all the interests of sound virtue and true religion;” “dishonors and *demonizes* the God of the universe,” &c. &c. Such, according to Bishop Simpson and Mr. Foster, are correct features of Calvinism! Their book *swarms* with such misrepresentations as these, only *worse*, if that were possible! And one of their chief authorities for these *charitable* statements, is the Presbyterian “Confession of Faith.” Now in all Christian courtesy, we of course must suppose that these Arminian brethren and their church, which publishes “The Objections to Calvinism,” really believe their own statements. But if the picture be a true one, it is difficult to understand Mr. Wesley, when, in speaking of our *Larger Catechism*, which is a summary of Calvinistic doctrines, he says that, “in the main, it is a *very excellent composition.*”† And how could he affirm, “I believe Calvin was a *great instrument of God*, and that he was a *wise and pious man.*” “John Calvin was a *pious, learned, sensible man.*”‡ Could such a man have taught a system of doctrine as *foul and monstrous* as Atheism itself?

More than this: The Confession of Faith of our church, which Messrs. Foster and Simpson say they have demonstrably convicted of such enormities, was the work of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Who were the members of that Assembly? What was their character? Let the "Methodist Quarterly Review" give the answer: That Assembly included "*a galaxy* of illustrious persons, of unequalled brightness"—"such were the leading spirits of the body"—"*stars* of the first magnitude." But according to Messrs. Simpson and Foster, this "*unequalled galaxy of stars*" shed upon the world *unequalled darkness!*

\* On Presbyterianism, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>†</sup> Works, vols. i. and ii. pp. 546, 475.

<sup>†</sup> Original Sin, part 2, sec. 2.

Original Site, part 2  
For October, 1848.

Again: "That famous Confession," says the same high Methodist authority, "is in many particulars a remarkable production"—"a well written instrument"—though "most thoroughly Calvinistic." "Whoever adopts it as the formulary of his faith, though he may err as to some speculative points, *will be sound* in all *things essential* to a saving appreciation of the way of salvation." Compare this honorable testimony with the statements of Messrs. Simpson and Foster. And what have been the practical results, the *fruits* of this Confession? "The influence of the labors of the Assembly," adds the same "Methodist Quarterly," "has been extensive and controlling over multitudes of the *better classes* of the inhabitants \* \* \* wherever the English language is spoken. *To their formularies*"—mark this!—"millions have owed their preservation from destructive errors, their theological knowledge, and *SAVING SOBER PIETY*." And all this from a system which, in certain of its features, "inculcates licentiousness, licenses crime, and *demonizes* the God of the universe!" So at least say these Arminian brethren.

But has not this "wild vine" of Calvinistic growth and culture, often produced "the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah?" The "Methodist Quarterly" shall answer: "Ever since,"—*i. e.* since the meeting of the Westminster Assembly—"it (the Confession) has exerted a *most salutary influence* in the world. By it the Romanizing tendency of the English Establishment has been kept in check; its opposition to uniformity has *perpetuated religious liberty*, while its deep-toned orthodoxy has stood as a *bulwark against the onsets* of every form of seductive error." These are certainly not the clusters of Sodom!

In confirmation of these facts, the "Methodist Quarterly" next cites Scotland as "an exemplification of the *practical tendency* of these formularies," and quotes from the Life of Alexander Henderson what is called "a felicitous statement of the case," as follows: "These (Westminster) divines have erected a monument in almost every heart in Scotland. \* \* \* Next to the introduction of Christianity, and the translation of the Bible into the vulgar tongue, the framing of the Confession of Faith and of the Catechism, has conferred the *greatest boon* on every Christian in our country." This differs *slightly* from the picture of Foster and Simpson!

Still further: The same Quarterly has a glowing eulogy of that distinguished Calvinist, Alexander Henderson, "who wrote the principal part of the Confession of Faith with his own hand." "He was evidently of that sort of men of which martyrs are made." "His country honors his memory as that of one of her chief benefactors

and the *whole Christian world* owes him a debt of lasting gratitude." If our Arminian brethren, *Foster and Simpson*, are right, the *Christian world* must be grateful for very *small favors!*

Finally, says the Reviewer: "The famous Westminster Assembly, \* \* \* in its origin, progress and end, was like a meteor bursting suddenly into being and beaming with *unwonted splendor* for a season, &c." "Not so, however, were its *effects*. Like the genial flowers and sunshine of early spring, it imparted life and strength to what had seemed *utterly dead*, \* \* \* the pledge of the coming summer and the seed time of that harvest whose reaping is yet in progress." Such were, and continue to be the *fruits* of a system, which in several of its distinctive features, "licenses crime and endangers all the interests of sound virtue and true religion!"

And even when this Arminian Reviewer speaks of "the vexed question of decrees," it is in a tone of candor and fairness very different from that which pervades the "Objections," &c. "It may be very difficult," he says, "by the force of logic, to evade the conclusion of the Predestinarians; it is equally difficult for them to reconcile their own views to a sense of justice and the revealed character of God. *Both parties* in this controversy have need to learn that some things are too high for them. If Revelation discloses truths which threaten to clash in their remote consequences, it becomes us to leave those consequences to God, nor dare to *dim the glory of His name* by *limiting his natural attributes of knowledge and power*, &c." The allusion we suppose to be especially to Dr. Adam Clarke's theological *foibles* in regard to Divine Foreknowledge. This Reviewer writes in a spirit which cannot be too strongly recommended to certain persons, who, with presumptuous daring, "rush in where angels fear to tread." But if he imagines that the Calvinistic scheme "so hides the moral perfections of God, as to make him appear as an Almighty Tyrant," we can only say that in our humble judgment, the charge is altogether without foundation, and indeed may be fairly retorted upon his own system. But where there is so much that is fair and candid, so much that does honor both to the head and heart of the Reviewer, so much to evince a spirit that bows to the supremacy of *truth*, even when she *frowns* upon him—in such circumstances we cannot feel any great disposition to find fault.

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From the very numerous expressions of approval which the writer has at different times received, the following are selected:

*From the late Dr. Archibald Alexander.*

“The subject has been treated in a fair and masterly manner. The argumentative part of the work is admirably conducted. The book should be widely circulated in our Church. Such a defense against the ungenerous attacks of many assailants, was called for, and will effectually subserve the promotion of evangelical truth.”

*From the Biblical Repertory.*

“The author has proved himself to be a workman that need not be ashamed. Whoever wishes to see the objections commonly made by Arminians to the Calvinistic system fairly rolled back on their own, will find satisfaction in the perusal of this volume.”

*From the Rev. William Engles, D. D. Editor of “The Presbyterian.”*

“Mr. Annan was induced to undertake this work in *self-defense*. \* \* \* He has furnished a popular treatise, which cannot be easily answered; hence his book has been assailed with great violence. But we can see no reason for so much *wrath* in the *temper or style* of this volume. He has carried the war into the enemy’s territory. We advise Presbyterians, when assailed by Arminians, to procure and circulate this book.”

*From Rev. Dr. Musgrave.*

“I was rejoiced to see a new edition of ‘The Difficulties of Arminian Methodism.’ It was quite time the slanders and gross misrepresentations of that denomination should be repelled and exposed. The author has ‘used them up’ handsomely, and deserves the thanks of all who love truth, honesty, honor, and rational piety.”

*From Rev. Dr. Elliott, of the Western Theological Seminary.*

“The work is well executed. The author has presented the difficulties of the system which he assails, in a clear and forcible manner. The radical authorities which he has introduced, greatly enhance the value of the work. Those who are so fond of exhibiting the difficulties of Calvinism, will here find room for the trial of their skill in settling the difficulties of their own system. The work is cheerfully recommended to the patronage of an intelligent Christian public.”

*From the late Rev. Dr. Baird, Editor of the Pittsburgh Christian Herald.*

“It was wise to carry the war into the territory of the assailants, and this Mr. Annan has done with ability and success.”

*From a Review in the Presbyterian.*

"It is a work full of merit, from its rational exhibition of what may be called theological absurdities—a luminous exposure of the absurdities of the Arminian system. The style, from its original method, is agreeable. It includes also an able defense of the doctrine of Calvin and others. To all who can obtain the book, we say—Read."

*From a Review in the Christian Herald.*

"A successful development of the difficulties of the Arminian system. I know of no volume so well adapted to expose the weak points of Methodism. The style is popular and sprightly, the argument pointed and concise. The 'Difficulties of Arminian Methodism' are strongly, fairly, yet succinctly stated. The volume is convenient, portable, neatly executed and popularly written. It is therefore well adapted to strengthen Presbyterians in their confidence in the truth of their own system, and guard them against the claims of arrogant Arminians."

*From the New York Observer.*

This is a new edition of a very able and valuable work. The author has most powerfully repelled the objections usually made to the Calvinistic system, and fully demonstrated that Arminianism is open to much greater objections, and embarrassed with far greater difficulties.

*From the Princeton Biblical Repertory, for October, 1860.*

This work has an established reputation. It has received the stamp of general approbation, and we rejoice that so useful a volume is again sent forth in an improved form. The constant misrepresentation of our doctrines render this work a very valuable aid.

*From the American Presbyterian.*

This is a standard work, and perfectly exhaustive of the subject of which it treats.

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## DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIANISM.

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### LETTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

To BISHOP SIMPSON :

*Rev. Sir*—I take the liberty of addressing these Letters to you, for several reasons :

1. You have been long a preacher, and for a time were one of the editors of the Methodist Episcopal church, and are well known as a zealous defender of its faith.
2. Your ministerial brethren have elevated you to a position among the chief functionaries of their ecclesiastical system, and of course you stand upon the watch-tower as a prominent guardian of its administration.

3. In a formal “Introduction” to the work called “Objections to Calvinism,” by the Rev. R. S. Foster, you have given your *endorsement* to the doctrinal *caricature* which he calls Calvinism. Thus you say, the “argumentation is strictly logical,” “the book is very valuable,” “well executed,” and of “great merit.” The numerous extracts which appear in these Letters, will furnish appropriate illustrations of this flattering notice from your pen. Suffice it for the present to say, that to every well informed Presbyterian, it must seem marvelous, that *you* should employ such terms in relation to such a production. But as the act is done, and as the “Objections” are published “for the Methodist Episcopal church”—as you have thus embarked your character as a theologian and a man of enlarged views, with that of

Mr. Foster, there seems to be a propriety in directing these Letters to you. These facts will also explain why, in referring to Mr. Foster's work, I couple your name with his—not only because you have indorsed his statements, but in your "Introduction" have *yourself* adopted some of the most offensive and injurious of them.

To illustrate my meaning: in speaking of "the subject of Predestination," which you say "has for ages engaged the attention of theologians and philosophers"—you state "the questions which arise" as follows: "Is the destiny of *every human being* unchangeably determined before his birth, *without reference to foreseen conduct?* Has the mind a power of choice? Can it move freely within certain specified limits? Will the nature of its movements and choice influence its eternal happiness?" "These questions," you add, "have in some form exercised the highest powers of the human intellect;" and the obvious inference which you wish to have made, is that Calvinists or Predestinarians hold the following positions, viz. that "the *eternal destiny* of *every man* is unchangeably fixed before his birth without reference to his foreseen conduct" or character as righteous or wicked—that the mind has no *power of choice*—that it cannot move freely—that the nature of its movements and choice have *no influence* on its eternal happiness."

Such is *Predestination!* Such, according to Bishop Simpson, are the doctrines held and taught by Presbyterians and other Calvinists. And the book which repeats and reiterates these *impious* statements, and attempts to fix them down upon Calvinistic churches, the Bishop indorses, and his sect publishes as one of "*great merit!*" Let the reader observe—Bishop S. does not affirm merely that these *impieties* have, by some Anti-Calvinists been considered as *legitimate inferences* from the doctrine of Predestination. That would be bad enough—but he goes much farther. These are the questions! These are the real points which have exercised

and divided the minds of “theologians and philosophers.” But so far as regards the Presbyterian church, we need hardly say that no person broaching such monstrous sentiments, could be received as a member of any of our ecclesiastical bodies—and if Bishop Simpson will undertake to prove such charges against any *individual minister* of our communion, we pledge our word that he shall be brought to trial, and if the Bishop shall sustain the accusation, that the guilty one shall be forthwith suspended from the office.

It is no concern of ours, even though you could prove that “the Atheistical school of philosophers,” “the Jewish Essenes” and “the Mohammedans,” held the doctrine of Predestination, *as you state it*. So also it has been fashionable for *Arminian* disputants to charge Calvinism with being nearly allied to *Stoical fate*. The Greek and Roman philosophers, called *Stoicks*, are admitted by even *Arminian* authors, to have been the greatest, wisest and most virtuous of all the heathens; and their sayings are often quoted by *Arminians* as a confirmation of some of the most important truths of Christianity; particularly relating to the unity and perfection of the Godhead, a future state, the duty and happiness of mankind, &c. The doctrine of *Fate*, as held by the *Stoicks*, was in some respects very erroneous, though they differed among themselves. And if any of them taught the same doctrine held by others of the ancient heathen—viz. that *Fate* was a power which overruled and controlled both *men and gods*, it was of course sheer Atheism. Even Bishop Simpson will not pretend to find any thing of this sort in Calvinism. But where do we find the “philosophers and theologians” of ancient and modern times, whose sympathies and views most nearly harmonized with those of modern *Arminians*? We find them among the followers of *EPICURUS*, the father of Atheism and licentiousness—among the *Saducees*, who said “that there is no *resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit*”—and among the *Mohammedans*, “one of whose

sects, and portions of other sects," the Bishop admits, "held the freedom of the human will," *i. e.* in the Arminian sense of freedom! And *last* but not *least*, "the *Jesuits*," yes, "the *JESUITS*, who became the most indefatigable enemies of the Reformation, \* \* \* were the advocates of (Arminian) free will!" Such is the testimony of Bishop S. himself! Arminianism has great cause to be proud of her allies.

In such volumes as the one which you have so profusely bepraised, it is common to find Calvinism represented as "a libel upon Deity, profane, scandalous, a system of blasphemy and impiety." But if this be true, it is really wonderful that so *bad a tree* should bear such "*good fruit*." From the partisan and sectarian verdict of such men as Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, and such preachers as Rev. R. S. Foster (whom you *indorse*), we appeal to the enlightened judgment of such acknowledged literary tribunals as "the British Encyclopedia," which contains the following, not written by a *Calvinist*: "There is one remark which we think ourselves in justice bound to make. It is this—that from the earliest age down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient Stoices, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists and Janse-nists, compared with that of their antagonists, the Epicureans, the Sadducees, the *Arminians* and the *Jesuits*, we shall find that they *have excelled*, in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues, and have been the HIGHEST HONOR to their own age, and the BEST MODELS for imitation to *every succeeding age*." Such is the testimony of an impartial witness, a first-rate scholar.

Again: The "Edinburgh Review," which has not been suspected of a leaning toward Calvinism, says: "Who were the first formidable opponents of this doctrine (predestination) in the Church of Rome? The *Jesuits*, the contrivers of courtly casuistry, and the *founders of lax morality*. Who, in the same church, inclined to the theology of Augustine?

The Jansenists, the teachers and the MODELS of austere morals."

Again : "It is a notorious and undeniable fact," remarks the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, "that wherever the doctrine and discipline of Calvin have existed and been allowed to operate, the people have been remarkable for an *enlightened piety and the strictness of their moral conduct.*"

To the same effect, hear one of your own most distinguished ministers, Rev. Dr. Elliott, for several years editor of the "Western Christian Advocate :" — "The Presbyterians of every class," remarks Dr. E. "were prominent and even foremost, in achieving the liberties of the United States. They have been all along the leading supporters of constitution and law, and good order. They have been the pioneers of learning and sound knowledge from the highest to the lowest grade, and are now its principal supporters. *The cause of morals and good order* has always found them THE FIRST TO AID, and among the last to retire from its support."

"The Presbyterians," adds Dr. E. "are not confounded and never will be, so long as they adhere to the Bible and to the promotion of truth and righteousness, as they *have always done* with more or less fidelity." "Many thousands of precious souls are annually brought to a saving knowledge of Christ by their instrumentality." Will Bishop Simpson venture to affirm that these are the lawful results of a system of impious and licentious dogmas, such as he ascribes to Calvinists? Did Dr. Ellibet regard the Presbyterian church in the light in which she is depicted by Mr. Foster? As well inquire whether "men gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles." As well band with the infidel and deny the truth of the inspired maxim, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Such then are *some* of the benign "fruits" of a system of doctrine, the character of which is drawn in your leading tracts and other publications as follows : — "It makes 'all preaching vain ;' 'it directly tends to destroy that holiness,

which is the end of all the ordinances of God ;' it 'directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works ;' it has 'also a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian revelation ;' it represents our Saviour 'as a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity ;' it 'destroys all God's attributes at once : it overturns both his justice, mercy and truth : yea, it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel and more unjust,' as 'an omnipresent, almighty tyrant.' 'This is the blasphemy clearly contained in the *horrible decree of predestination.*'"

"Ye shall know the truth," said our blessed Lord, "and *the truth* shall make you free." Commence the inquiry at any point you please. Go back to the days of the celebrated Augustine of the fourth century. To him Mosheim ascribes "the glory of having suppressed *Pelagianism* in its very birth." All acknowledge him to have been a Predestinarian of a high order. Did he hold "that the good and the bad actions of men were from eternity fixed by an invincible (or natural) necessity?" No, he explicitly rejected, like modern Calvinists, such an *impious dogma!* Bishop S. cannot be ignorant of the history of the Waldenses and Albigenses, who in the retired fastnesses of the Alps, preserved *the truth* for so many ages safe from the corruptions of Rome. Yet they were Predestinarians. So were the leading Reformers of the sixteenth century—as the creeds which they prepared abundantly testify. Contrast, too, the Arminianism and morals of Laud and his semi-popish clergy, and of Claverhouse and his dragoons—with "the austere morality and the fear of God" which pervaded all ranks of the Covenanters, and also of the army of Cromwell—as Macaulay assures us. In that singular camp, the historian tells us, "no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, \* \* \* the property of the peaceable citizen and the honor of woman were held sacred," &c. These were the *fruits* of Calvinism ! And the lives of such

moderns as Thomas Scott, Legh Richmond, Bunyan, Edwards, Whitefield, and a host of other Calvinists, all testify that “a fountain that sends forth such streams of purity must be a pure fountain.” Even your own “Quarterly Review,” in a very unfair and unfriendly notice of certain “*Lives of Calvin*,” admits that at Geneva “his practical discipline was of the severest cast.” And one of the proofs is, “dancing and other amusements were strictly prohibited.”\* Yet this same Quarterly, when it wishes to glorify a certain Arminian preacher, speaks of “his opposition to dancing” in a very commendatory tone !† “*Opposition to dancing*” is good in an Arminian preacher, but hardly endurable in John Calvin! Thus leaks out that harsh, intolerant, exclusive sectarianism which lives and breathes throughout your church. This it is which prompts the extravagant eulogy of a certain Rev. Jesse Lee, who, as we are told by your highest authorities, near the close of the last century, abandoned “the scattered population of Virginia,” “a country then *very inadequately supplied with the ordinances of religion*”—for what purpose? why, to carry the (Methodist) gospel to New England, “which had always,” as your Quarterly admits, “been supplied with abundance of religious teachers,” but where there were no Methodists! Such is the Apostolic zeal of pure Arminianism! No wonder that the same Quarterly elsewhere affirms, “that the spirit of sect, a spirit of *early intrusion*, of facile growth and of late eradication, has *without question* been FAR TOO PREVALENT in our (Methodist) communion.”‡ Jesse Lee, in his benevolent mission to convert the adherents of the theology of Jonathan Edwards, Dwight, Brainard and Payson, never uttered a more palpable *truth* than this of your “Quarterly!” No, not even when at the commencement of his “momentous message to New England,” as your historian Stevens tells us,§ “he pronounced the

\* For October, 1850, p. 584.

† For April, 1850, p. 188.

‡ For January, 1850, p. 67.

§ Page 41.

*remonstrance of Methodism* against such Puritan doctrines as “infant damnation!”” Whether the spirit of Christ, or “the spirit of sect,” is the reigning impulse in such movements as this, let enlightened Christianity decide. The *morals* of the thing are patent to every discerning eye.

In claiming “the Lutheran church” as “strictly agreeing with the Arminian view of Predestination,” Bishop Simpson is not more successful. No Presbyterian would object to the following statements from Professor Schmucker’s “Popular Theology:” “The purposes or intentions of God are of two kinds; either *causative*, which refer to his own intended actions: or *permissive*, relating to those actions which he foresees that his creatures will perform, and which he resolves *not to prevent.*” “These purposes of God, either *causative* or *permissive*, do extend to all things.” “What God thus intended (or purposed) in eternity, he actually executes in time.” “The Divine providence, *i. e.* the execution of God’s eternal purposes or intentions, EXTENDS TO ALL THINGS.”\* This, of course, includes sin. No Presbyterian could ask a clearer statement of the doctrine of his Catechism — “the decrees of God are his eternal purpose, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained *whatsoever comes to pass.*” Again: “This sin (of our first parents) God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to *permit*, having purposed to order it to his own glory.”† In like manner, Dr. John Owen, a Calvinist of the period of the Westminster Assembly, and one of the greatest authorities and advocates of Predestination: “The decree of reprobation is the eternal purpose of God to suffer (or permit) many to sin, to leave them in their sin, and not giving them to Christ, to punish them for their sin.”‡ And the Catechism: “Our first parents, *being left to the freedom of their own will*, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.” Q. 13. Yet this is the scheme of doctrine which Bishop Simpson

\* Popular Theology, p. 95.    † Confession, p. 30.    ‡ Vol. 5, p. 14.

tells the public, *denies* “to the mind a *power* of choice”—denies “that the nature of its choice influences the soul’s eternal happiness ! !”

Neither will any sound Presbyterian object to Dr. Schmucker’s views when he says—“The decrees of God relative to the future destiny of men, were formed *in view*, that is, with a *full knowledge* of the conduct of men, \* \* \* as is manifest from the absolute omniscience of God.” “These decrees,” he adds, “were formed in view (with a full knowledge) of men’s voluntary agency.” So far as regards those who finally perish, our Confession expressly says, they are “passed by and ordained to wrath *for their sin*”—and, of course, it *must* have been “*in view*, or with *full knowledge* of their conduct,” as Dr. Schmucker well expresses the truth. In regard to those who shall be saved, Dr. Schmucker says, “the decree of predestination to eternal life, is *based on* the foreseen voluntary conduct of the individuals.” This expression—“a decree based on voluntary conduct”—the Calvinist would not employ in reference to the *finally saved*. Yet perhaps even here, the difference is rather verbal than real ; for Dr. S. adds : “Our salvation is not of works, but of grace. Yes, humble Christian ! Thy works shall follow thee, not as a *ground* of justification, or as satisfaction to the demands of the violated law ; for Christ and his *merits* are the **ONLY BASIS OF OUR HOPE**, the only satisfaction for sin. \* \* \* But the works of the believer shall be the *measure* of his future gracious reward ;” i. e. “we shall be rewarded *according to our works.*”\* It will be seen, therefore, that Dr. S. admits the *true and only* scriptural “*ground*” on which “eternal life” is **BASED**. Of course, “the decree” to bestow salvation agrees with the *truth* of the case, i. e. it is founded on the “*only basis of our hope,*” in “Christ and his *merits*;” not on “foreseen voluntary conduct.” This agrees with Calvinism, and the difference on this point seems to be merely

\* Popular Theology, pp. 100, 108.

*verbal.* Hence there appears no very strong *family likeness* between the Lutheran theology and the system of Episcopal Methodism. Besides, Professor S. affirms that the Holy Spirit “produces faith”—“that what he *does* in time, he eternally intended or purposed to do”—which is the doctrine of Paul, viz. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” 2 Thess. 2 : 13.

I anticipate the following objection to much that is said in these Letters: “The system here expounded is not the Calvinism of its original teacher. *Surely John Calvin was a Calvinist.*” I reply :

1. The Presbyterian church has never held herself responsible for some of the doctrines taught by the illustrious Calvin. It is true her “Board of Publication” have issued “the Institutes.” But mark ! It is with several express *qualifications*. “Considering the *circumstances in which they were written*,” they say, “*the Institutes form an invaluable body of divinity.*” “*Yet some of the expressions of Calvin on the subject of Reprobation may be regarded as too unqualified, and we can no further indorse them than as they are incorporated in the Presbyterian Confession.*” “*And it must be acknowledged that some of the doctrines therein maintained, have been more luminously set forth in modern times.*” Here there is an express disavowal of some of Calvin’s sentiments in regard to Reprobation.

2. In the book of Mr. Foster, which you and your church have indorsed, great injustice is done to Presbyterians. You cannot be ignorant of the familiar distinction of *Supralapsarian* and *Sublapsarian* among those who are in common called Calvinists. This distinction had its origin in a difference of views in regard to the Divine purposes, and the doctrine of election. Calvin, Beza, Witsius, and some others, were most probably *Supralapsarians*. The Presbyterian church, on the contrary, are to a man *Sublapsarian*.

To charge upon Dr. Rice and other Presbyterians, as you have done, the ultra Calvinism of the *Supralapsarians*, is about as fair as though we should hold you responsible for the low *Arminianism* of Whitby and Taylor of Norwich! These men boasted of their Arminianism ; but we should be sorry to suppose that your church is prepared to acknowledge any affinity with their gross errors. And in reference to what is now called Arminianism in this country, it was well remarked by the late Professor Stuart, of Andover, “that *Arminius himself was no Arminian.*”\*

3. Similar injustice is done to our church, when in “the Objections to Calvinism,” you group together detached paragraphs and sentences from high Supralapsarian Calvinists, combined with fragments torn from the writings of Hill, Chalmers, Edwards and others. How easy in this way to convict Paul of denying the necessity of *repentance*; for he says, “the gifts and calling of God are *without repentance!*” How obvious that he advocated licentiousness; for he says, “I thank God that ye were *the servants of sin!*” And the Psalmist can in this way be shown to have been an Atheist; for, “there is no God!” Ps. 14.

To prove the correctness of this representation, we cite one or two examples. The first is a quotation on page 23 of “the Objections to Calvinism,” from the Institutes, vol. ii. p. 171. “I shall not hesitate to confess with Augustine, that the will of God is the necessity of things, and that what he has willed will necessarily come to pass.” But did not Mr. Foster perceive that this was not the end of the sentence? Calvin adds, in explanation of the term “necessity,” “as those things are really *about to happen* which he has foreseen.” And ten lines farther down he says : “Their perdition depends on the Divine predestination *in such a manner*, that the *cause* and *matter* of it are from themselves.” Again, six lines farther: “Man falls according to the appointment of Divine

\* Biblical Repository, April, 1831.

Providence; but he *falls by his own fault*"—"by his own wickedness, \* \* \* which is the *evident cause* of condemnation;" \* \* \* "the ground of it (his *misery*) he has *derived from himself, NOT FROM GOD.*" Such is a specimen of your demonstrative *proofs* that Calvinists make "God the originator and cause of sin"—"that God decreed *all the sins of all men*"—and "that the decree and thing decreed stand related as CAUSE AND EFFECT."\* Such is a specimen of Bishop Simpson's "strict logic." Thus Mr. Foster and he have made "this doctrine (Calvinism) to *vanish with its foundations*, which (they say,) have been DEMONSTRATED to be false."†

Another illustration of these *Arminian "demonstrations."* You refer (p. 26) to the Institutes, vol. i. p. 194, as follows: "It should be considered as indubitably certain that all the revolutions visible in the world proceed from the secret exertion of Divine power. What God decrees must *necessarily* come to pass." Thus ends your extract. But this is not the close of Calvin's sentence; for he instantly adds, "yet it is not by *absolute or natural necessity*." He then cites "the familiar example" of the "bones of Christ," which were capable of "being broken," "yet that they should be broken was impossible;" because the Scripture must certainly be fulfilled, "a bone of him shall not be broken." It seems that *prophecy* gives rise to necessity as understood by Calvin.‡ Such is another of Bishop Simpson's "strictly logical" *demonstrations*, that according to Calvinism, "God causes men to rob, murder, blaspheme, &c.!"

Without multiplying these humiliating examples of *unfair* quotation, we only add the closing sentence of the Bishop's "Introduction:" "We doubt not," he says, "that many, after perusing these pages ("Objections to Calvinism"), will fully acquiesce with Calvin, in terming, as he did, the decree

\* Objections, &c. pp. 31, 32.

† Ibid, p. 198.

‡ For other illustrations of his meaning, see Appendix to this volume.

of Predestination a ‘HORRIBLE DECREE.’” But that this statement in regard to Calvin’s meaning is contrary to truth, is obvious for several reasons :

(1.) Calvin never represented the *Divine decree* as “horrible” in the common acceptation of that term. Hence, when Mr. Foster refers to the same sentiment, on page 70 of the “Objections,” he has it as follows : “It is an *awful decree*, I must confess.” Thus we have Foster versus Simpson, preacher against bishop ! Which of them is the more correct, the public must decide. Every tyro knows that the Latin term *horribile* often means “awful,” as Mr. F. gives it.

(2.) Mr. Foster’s translation is that of Allen, which is generally received as reliable. But the Bishop follows Wesley and other partisan controvertists, who “have no greater joy” than to heap abuse upon Calvin !

(3.) The distinguished Dr. Henry, of Berlin, in his celebrated “Life and Times of Calvin,” translates *horribile decretum*—“terror-moving decree,” and says the passage “does honor to his (Calvin’s) feelings.” He also quotes a French author (Ancillon, *Melanges Critiques*, p. 37,) as affirming that instead of “describing God’s decrees as *horrible*, Calvin simply meant that we *ought to tremble* at contemplating this mystery.” And he adds, “so he (Calvin) himself expresses it in the *French version* of the *Institutes*.” Henry also refers to Rivet as “*saying the same thing*.”

(4.) And to crown all this evidence against Bishop Simpson, let it be remembered that it is a question of *fact*. Did Calvin *really intend* by the phrase, “*horribile decretum*,” to reproach Predestination, or the doctrine of Divine decrees, as a “horrible” doctrine, implying the ideas conveyed by the terms shocking, hideous, revolting, odious ? Let Calvin answer for himself. Thus Book 3, chap. xxi. sec. 1 : “We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the fountain of God’s free mercy, till we are acquainted with his eternal election, which illustrates the

grace of God," &c. "Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the Divine glory, and diminishes real humility." Again he speaks of Predestination as "the inmost recesses of Divine wisdom," and as "that sublimity of wisdom which God would have us to adore, and not to comprehend, to promote our admiration of his glory." "He determined thus, because he foresaw it would tend to the just illustration of the glory of his name." To say that Calvin represented the decree of God as "horrible," is contrary to these uniform declarations, is to represent him as falling under his own solemn rebuke, Book 3, chap. xxi. sec. 4, "whoever endeavors to raise prejudices against the doctrine of Predestination, openly reproaches God," &c. In the light of these and many other passages, is it not wonderful that Bishop Simpson should revive this stale and ridiculous story about the "horrible decree;" and which has been long since exploded? Even John Wesley admits that Calvin was "a wise, pious man." But if so, how could he have reproached his Maker as revealing a doctrine which is "horrible?" A doctrine, too, which he himself held and taught as scriptural!

To follow Messrs. Foster and Simpson in this way through all their professed quotations, and expose them in detail, would of course require a large volume. If a certain heathen god could be known by his *foot*, so may Arminianism be tested by these specimens of its "logical argumentation." Besides, many of the professed extracts are shielded from investigation by defective reference. Thus to a number of the most objectionable we find appended, "Hill," "Calvin," "Witsius," "Zanchius," &c. But Calvin's works are contained in *twelve large folio volumes*, and those of Witsius in nearly the same number! In the same manner they refer to "Presbyterian Tracts," which are bound in ten volumes, containing more than four thousand pages, and to "Dick," "Edwards," "Chalmers," and others. No rational person will expect us to look through some fifty or a hundred large volumes on s

We are told in these "Objections to Calvinism," "that the book had its origin in the fact that the M. E. church had been long and grievously *assailed* by one of the organs" of the Presbyterian church; and "by an accredited champion (Dr. Rice), *at a time when peace and Christian union had long existed.*" Thus "*truth and religion required it!*" Of course Dr. Rice's "*unprovoked intermeddling*" rendered it necessary (for Messrs. Foster and Simpson) "to uncover the revolting and shameful deformities" of Presbyterianism.\* But in reply, Dr. Rice assures us that "*the unprovoked intermeddling*" in the particular case referred to, came from the Methodist organ, the "*Western Christian Advocate,*" which published an article on '*Church Membership,*' containing incorrect and offensive statements respecting the Presbyterian church." Here was the "*intermeddling,*" and it was all on the *Arminian* side!

Again: Without referring to these more recent *assaults* from that quarter, we have had in our possession for more than *twenty-five* years, the books and tracts published by the highest authorities of your church on this subject, widely circulated, injurious to the *moral character* of the Presbyterian ministry, and designed to bring disgrace upon her doctrines and cherished usages. From one of these publications,† we make the following extracts. In speaking of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, they say: "For several years the public have been entertained with pitiful complaints against the Arminians and Methodists, for misrepresenting their doctrine, and charging them with principles of fatality, reprobation, &c. all which they *have gravely affected to deny.* And that they may lull the people into favor, they *have dwelt with seeming earnestness on the general invitations of the gospel, free agency in man, and universal atonement of Christ; but with all their ingenuity they have not been able to conceal from*

\* See "Objections," pp. 13, 138, &c.

† See tract, "Duplicity Exposed."

*the well informed, the cloven foot of their peculiar tenets, unconditional election and reprobation.”—pp. 1, 2.*

Again: “Notwithstanding the pitiful whining about their being misrepresented, they are as high-toned Predestinarians at this day as ever they were.” “We say,” continues the tract, “they believe the doctrine of eternal and unchangeable decrees, of unconditional election and reprobation, of the *universal agency of God, by which he worketh all things in all men, even wickedness in the wicked*?—“because he chooses on the whole that they should go on in sin, and *thereby give him a plausible pretext for damning them in the flames of hell forever.*” “We do not mean to blame any person for believing the above stated doctrine, if they cannot conscientiously disbelieve it; but we do and must blame them, when *they dissemble their belief by sometimes saying they do not believe what we know they industriously teach.*”—pp. 8, 9.

Again they say: “The object of this tract is not to controvert or disprove the horrid sentiments it discloses, but simply to demonstrate that such sentiments are held and propagated, while many who *affect to disavow* them, are endeavoring to suit them to the popular taste by exhibiting them in a disguising dress. *We blame not people who honestly believe, but we blame those who disbelieve what they openly profess and teach.*”—pp. 9, 10.

The substance of these quotations may be collected at one view from such passages as the following: “*To dissemble with the public, by artifice conceal our real sentiments, professing one thing while we industriously circulate another;*” “*that they may lull the people into favor, they have dwelt with seeming earnestness*”—“*dissemble their belief*”—“*disbelieving what they profess and teach,*” &c. &c.

It would be easy to fill pages with similar deliverances extracted from your standard publications. These declarations will serve to qualify such *brotherly* expressions as the following, on pages 15, 138, of your “Objections:” “Toward

the Presbyterian church I have cherished sentiments of the profoundest attachment from my early boyhood. \* \*. These sentiments remain to this hour." "I must be allowed to cherish *love* for your church." "Would that you had been content to *enjoy peace*, and left your neighbors to pursue their own vocation," &c.

Such then is the neighborly love of these Arminian brethren. If their statements were generally believed, the effect must be to degrade us from our ministerial standing, as unworthy of countenance among all honorable and righteous men. Not content with endeavoring to show that our system of doctrine legitimately leads to certain impious consequences, they publish us from Dan to Beersheba, as guilty of deliberate and *designed dishonesty*, because we are not willing to think with them in this matter, but refuse to adopt a thousand impieties of the Arminian brain.

"If these charges are not true," said a preacher to some Presbyterians, "why are they not contradicted and refuted?" We have been driven, therefore, to the unpleasant alternative, either of standing before the public as confounded by a sense of guilt, our forbearance construed to our disadvantage, and our love of peace made a pretext for more violent assault; or of taking up the pen to assert and prove our innocence, and to direct the course of public justice, so as to strike those who are really guilty. The interests of truth will not permit us to be silent. To ourselves, our children, and the church of God, we owe it, to let the truth be known. And if in defending the precious cause of our Master, and vindicating our good name, we are compelled to publish some things which seem to bear heavily upon those whom we wish to call Christians, we appeal to the candor of every reader, to say, *where must rest the responsibility.*

## LETTER II.

ORIGINAL, OR BIRTH SIN.—ARMINIAN CONTRADICTIONS  
AND INCOHERENCIES.

REV. SIR—In order fully to comprehend the nature and excellence of the gospel method of salvation, it is obviously proper, in the first place, to examine minutely the moral *disease* of which it is the Divinely appointed *remedy*. I ask, therefore, your close attention, whilst we proceed to test by Scripture and reason, the views of Arminians upon the great cardinal doctrine of Original Sin, or as your Discipline terms it, “birth sin.”

Among the Articles of Religion published for the Methodist Episcopal church, and (along with the Discipline,) recommended to all their people, “next to the Word of God,” the 7th is in the following terms :

“Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.”

This article, as expounded by one of your leading authorities, describes “the lapsed condition into which the *first act* of disobedience plunged the first pair and their whole posterity,” and “the death threatened to Adam” and “his whole posterity,” is admitted to be “the fullness of death,” or “death *temporal, spiritual and eternal*.”\* The article is essentially Calvinistic so far as it goes, though defective in some particulars. But the great matter of surprise is, that such correct and scriptural views of man’s fall and its far-reaching results, have been incorporated in a system otherwise Arminian. That such an attempt to mingle “iron and clay” in the same

\* Watson’s Institutes, chap. 18, pp. 226, 241.

doctrinal structure, involves you in the strangest incoherencies and contradictions, we purpose to show as we proceed. Indeed the utter impossibility of reconciling these sound Calvinistic views of "birth sin" with other essential features of the Arminian scheme, was felt by its original advocates. "These early defenders of that scheme, came out boldly and fearlessly with their doctrine." Whatever else they were, they were men of discernment, sufficient at least to perceive the absolute incongruity of the fundamental principles of Calvinism and Arminianism, and the utter futility of the attempt to interweave light with darkness, as your system does. Such logical reasoners as Borraeus, Corvinus, Venator, and the older remonstrants, could never be brought to undertake so fruitless a labor. Take a few examples : "It is perversely said that Original Sin makes any one guilty of death." "That which we have by birth ("birth sin") can be *no evil of sin*, because to be born is plainly involuntary." "Original Sin is neither *a sin* properly so called, which should make the posterity of Adam guilty of God's wrath ; nor yet is it a *punishment of any sin on them*." "It is against equity that one should be accounted guilty of a sin that is not his own, \* \* \* who in regard of his own will is truly innocent." "Infants are simply in that estate in which Adam was before his fall." "Adam sinned in his own proper person only, and there is no reason why God should impute that sin unto infants."\* Such are a few of the doctrinal extremes to which the early Arminians logically pushed their system. If Bishop S. and his brethren of the present day, profess to repudiate such results, we should be sorry to put a harsh construction upon their conduct. It is not the prerogative of any man to judge the motives of his neighbor. We do not allege, therefore, "that the old forms of the Arminian system are so repulsive the people will not receive them, \* \* and modern

\* See Dr. John Owen's "Display of Arminianism," where the quotations are given in the original Latin.

Methodists have assumed new positions, not only to *conceal* their doctrine, but if possible to *defend it*.<sup>\*</sup> Far be it from us to accuse our Arminian brethren with “disingenuousness and cowardice, if not with *downright duplicity*, for thus shunning and covering up the more repulsive features of their system.”<sup>†</sup> Their error, we would fain hope, belongs rather to the head than the heart. “If any man,” remarked the eloquent Baptist, Robert Hall, “says he is an Arminian, the inference is that he is not a good logician.”

The great inconsistency of this attempt to patch Arminianism with shreds of Calvinistic doctrine, has been also felt by some of the more modern anti-Calvinists. Whitby, who is one of Mr. Foster’s authorities against us, speaks contemptuously of “God’s *imaginary compact* with Adam, that if he prevaricated, he should procure not only to himself but to *all* his posterity, *the death both of the body and soul*.” “This,” he says, “manifestly contradicts the express word of God.”<sup>‡</sup> And he talks of “the *forged compact* between God and Adam, to justify this imputation of his sin to his posterity.” So also Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich, who is favorably noticed and quoted by Dr. Clarke, in some of his expositions of the Epistle to the Romans, maintains that the death which entered by sin of “one man” (Rom. 5:12), is no more than that which *we all die* when the body returns to dust; and he argues at length to prove that death and affliction come on Adam’s posterity, not as a punishment or calamity, but as a *benefit*, especially as connected with the resurrection.<sup>‡</sup> But how the “resurrection to damnation,” which comes to the wicked, can be regarded as a *benefit* or “advantage furnished through *grace* in Christ,” is not easily understood. Both Taylor and Whit-

\* The language here used is quoted from Dr. Fisk’s “Discourse on Predestination,” published by the General Conference, through their Book Concern. It is directed against Calvinists. pp. 34, 35, 36

† Discourses on the Five Points, pp. 7, 8.

‡ For the extracts which prove these statements, see Edwards on Original Sin, ch. 1, 4.

by stand high among the assailants of Calvinism ; and the “Discourses on the Five Points” have often furnished weapons to the enemies of that system. They are sad illustrations of the facility with which consistent logical Arminianism finds “a lower deep” in blank Pelagianism, leading to such results as “that the consequences, guilt and corruption of Adam’s sin were confined to his own person—that newborn infants are in the same situation with Adam before the fall,” &c. How close to this dark gulf of error, the leading Methodist brethren verge in their attempts to harmonize their conflicting sentiments, will appear in the sequel. With such facts before us, we proceed to examine the Difficulties of the Arminian scheme.

#### I. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIAN METHODISM IN REFERENCE TO THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.—THE CONFUSED, INCOHERENT, AND CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS MADE UPON THIS SUBJECT.

1. “The corruption of nature” taught in the article above quoted, into which Adam’s sin “plunged all his posterity,” and by which “man is inclined to evil and that continually,” is manifestly the fountain whence flows all actual sin, the root of all bitterness, an evil of fearful magnitude, a curse of tremendous extent. Who then is the guilty author of this dread calamity, by which corruption, and misery, and death, are handed down from generation to generation ? Is it the infant or the parent ? Must we trace it back to Adam, the primitive ancestor of the race ; or must we impute it to the Creator himself ? In answer to these questions, the Methodist Standard of doctrine says not a word ; and the members and ministers are left to believe and teach, upon this subject, whatever is right in their own eyes. Men may adopt their Articles and Discipline, and yet maintain that God is the author of sin, the originating cause of that “corruption of nature” by which “man is inclined to evil and that continu-

ally," and thus the author of all sin. This, their religious teachers may hold and inculcate, and yet, so far as appears, be good Methodists. The whole subject is submitted to the freak, or fancy, or frenzy, of each individual, whether preacher or ordinary member.

Now, it is well known to be a favorite topic of declamation, among these opposers of Presbyterianism, that *our* system leads inevitably to the adoption of the forementioned monstrous doctrine of the origin of sin. Long, and loud, and oft repeated, are their asseverations to this effect; and they do not hesitate, as we have seen, to charge us, who reject the thought with abhorrence, as guilty of a want of candor, or something worse. But what says the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian church upon the subject of the author of sin? "The sinfulness thereof (viz. of sinful actions) proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." Ch. 5. sec. 4. And this, be it remembered, is a declaration, to which all Presbyterian ministers and elders, at their ordination, solemnly give their assent and approbation. A man *may* be a good preacher of Methodism—he will resist no regulation among men, nor violate any ministerial oath, who holds and teaches that God is the author of sin; but the fundamental principles of the Presbyterian church for ever forbid to such a person an entrance into her ministry or eldership, under the penalty of a conscience perjured before earth and heaven.

Again: the "corruption of nature" taught by the Article is *necessary and unavoidable*. Man brings it into the world with him; and he can no more *avoid* being the child of sinful parents, and of course, the child of a corruption by which "he is inclined to continual evil," than he can determine the time and place of his birth. He is therefore *necessarily and unavoidably*, "without any preceding fault or offense of his," "very far gone from original righteousness, and inclined to

evil and that continually.” But Dr. W. Fisk, speaking as the organ of the General Conference, tells us, “that if God holds men responsible for what is *unavoidable*, nothing more could be said of the most merciless tyrant.” (Disc. on Predes. p. 13.) It follows, therefore, that though “man is inclined to evil and that continually,” yet he is not “responsible” for this wickedness, because it is unavoidable; in other words, “Original Sin” is no sin, but a very innocent, harmless thing, which none but a “merciless tyrant” would ever consider deserving of punishment!

Nevertheless, Dr. Fisk further assures us (p. 30,) that “all depravity, whether derived or contracted, is damning in its nature.” Here we are back on the old ground: Original Sin is *unavoidable*, therefore it is no sin; but still it is “*damning in its nature!*” How is this? The Doctor will tell us: “*Guilt is not imputed*, until by a voluntary rejection of the gospel remedy, man makes the depravity of his nature the object of his choice.” “By a *voluntary* rejection of the gospel remedy.” But, Rev. Doctor, does not your seventh Article teach “a corruption of nature, by which man is inclined to evil and that continually?” And if he be inclined to *continual* evil, then is he inclined to this *very evil of rejecting* the gospel remedy. It is idle, therefore, on your own principles, to talk of a voluntary (or sinful) rejection of the gospel remedy, when man is *necessarily and unavoidably INCLINED* to reject it. Of course, it can be no sin to reject it; and God would be a “merciless tyrant” to “impute guilt” for rejecting the remedy. How then can a depravity which none can *avoid*, which none but “merciless tyranny” could regard as deserving of punishment, be said to be “*damning in its nature?*”

In reply to this reasoning, a writer in defense of Dr. Fisk, whilst admitting that man is by “nature inclined to evil continually,” asserting, too, that this “destroys the freedom of his will,” and that it would be mockery for the Divine Being to set before him life and death, and invite him to choose

life, "when he was morally incapable of such a choice;" yet thinks he relieves the subject of the difficulty, by stating that "Dr. F. assumes man as *graciously assisted* to make a voluntary choice." In other words, man is by birth the heir of a depravity which "*unavoidably inclines him to continual evil.*" It follows, therefore, according to Dr. F. that he has no power of voluntary choice, and is not a free moral agent, until "*graciously assisted,*" and made capable of voluntary choice; and thus, the Dr. continues, "through the grace of the gospel, all are born free from condemnation." p. 30. Which is about the same as to say, that man is enabled "*by grace*" to escape a condemnation which, being previously *unavoidable*, it would have been *merciless tyranny* to execute. A wondrous act of *grace*, truly, to assist the sinner to avoid a punishment which none but a *tyrant* could inflict! A strange idea of the grace of the gospel, that it comes in to render men capable of sinning, deserving of punishment for their sin, and liable to a "*condemnation*" which, *but for this grace*, a righteous God could not justly execute upon any descendant of the apostate pair!

2. The article quoted above, as expounded by leading Arminian authors, makes God the *author of all sin*, except that which produced the fall. Let us look at this subject:

The providential arrangement, agreeably to which "the first sin plunged all Adam's posterity in corruption and death," as Watson abundantly proves, was obviously not the natural constitution which now prevails between the father and child. No such dreadful and wide-spread consequences now attend the parental relation. Of course, the original constitution which secured such fatal results must have been peculiar, extraordinary, supernatural; in other words, it was a special "*covenant*" made and appointed by the God of providence, for the special circumstances of our first parents. This is not denied by Watson, who quotes approvingly the following statements of Arminius:

"The tenor of the covenant into which God entered with our first parents was this—that if they continued in the favor and grace of God by the observance of that precept (viz. 'thou shalt not eat of it,' &c.) and others, the gifts which had been conferred upon them *should be transmitted to their posterity*; \* \* \* but that if they should render themselves unworthy through disobedience, *their posterity* should likewise be deprived of those favors; \* \* \* hence it followed, that all men who were to be naturally propagated from them, have become *obnoxious to death temporal and eternal*, and have been destitute of that gift of the Holy Spirit or of original righteousness. This *punishment* is usually called a privation of the image of God and *original sin*."<sup>\*</sup>

This is clear and explicit. Will Bishop Simpson and other Arminians look at it for a few moments. Here was a "Covenant," or Divine Constitution, made with our first parents. Of course, God was its Author. It was extraordinary and supernatural, and the results which were to follow in the course of Providence, were of Divine origin and appointment. In virtue of this Divine ordination, "fallen man, including all his posterity," were plunged into a state of corruption and misery, became, "inclined to evil, and that continually," inherit a corrupt nature or spiritual death, and "are born liable not only to bodily death, a part of the penalty, but that is sufficient to show," says Watson, "that *they are born under THE WHOLE MALEDICTION*."<sup>†</sup> Such, Bishop S. is the arrangement under which, by Divine appointment, *all men are born!* Such, "the punishment" which God *appoints* for all men, including infants of every age! In the language of your favorite, Foster, we ask, "How came these miserable creatures in their condition of sin and wretchedness? You must answer, They were put there by the decree or appointment of God."<sup>‡</sup> And this "whole malediction," viz. "death—

\* Institutes, vol. ii. p. 78.

† Watson's Inst. vol. ii. p. 58.

‡ Objections to Calvinism, p. 88.

temporal, spiritual, and eternal," (Watson, chap. 18)—this "punishment of the privation of the image of God" (Arminius and Watson,) is *necessary and unavoidable* by any child of Adam! If the worthy Bishop and his favorite Foster, will open almost any page of their "Objections to Calvinism," their eye will quickly light upon an epithet of sufficient *horror* for a case of this sort! So true is it, that our Arminian brethren have fallen into the pit which they had dug for their Calvinistic neighbors! Thus they represent the all-merciful Creator as the author of all the most malignant forms of sin, and of the dreadful sufferings which flow from it.

3. Leaving Bishop S. and his Arminian brethren to choose between the sentiment of Dr. Fisk, viz. that, "through the grace of the Gospel all are born free from condemnation," and the opposite sentiment of Watson, viz. that "all are born under the whole malediction,"—both which contradictory statements are published in the accredited writings of the General Conference; let us look a little further into this curious scheme of Arminianism.

"The whole malediction," "the *punishment* under which *all are born*," as Arminius and Watson affirm, is represented as falling upon creatures who are perfectly *guiltless*! To substantiate this statement, let Bishop S. open Mr. Foster's book, which he so highly applauds: "The doctrine," (of Calvinism,) he says, "is, that mankind were viewed as fallen in Adam, and all of them under condemnation and *deserving of death*." "But, if it be said the wrong is not in their remaining unregenerate, but in their being so in the first instance, I reply, neither are *they to blame for this*, because it was entirely *without their consent*. They were *born corrupt*, and so *cannot be guilty for this*."\* But if these conclusions be just, these Arminian Doctors should immediately propose

\* Objections to Calvinism, pp. 90, 166. Much more of the same sort is found in the book.

an alteration in the title of their seventh Article. Instead of "Original or Birth *Sin*," it should read, "Original or Birth *Misfortune!*" There is obviously no *sin* in the case. In like manner, the "Methodist Magazine,"\* in reviewing this work in a former edition, remarks as follows: "To us it is as manifest as the meridian light, that to suffer the temporal consequences (viz. of "the original offense,") is one thing, and to lie under the *guilt* of the first offense so as to be liable to eternal punishment, is quite another." Again, "the offspring of our original ancestors may be *unavoidably* involved in the *consequences* of their original offense, without being consequently and necessarily involved in the *guilt* of their original act." Here it is asserted that all the offspring of Adam are involved in "the temporal consequences" of his first sin, viz. "death—temporal and spiritual," as Watson states them—but without lying under the *guilt* of that or any other offense. In other words, all men inherit, *unavoidably*, original or birth sin—are "inclined to evil, and that continually," and suffer death; but, still, this "punishment" falls upon those who are not "involved in *guilt*," i. e. though guiltless of sin, either original or actual, they are compelled to suffer such dreadful "punishment!" But, what is guilt? It has been well defined to be "the state of any being *justly* charged with crime." It follows that these great and *unavoidable* evils, viz. "death—temporal and spiritual," are inflicted as a "punishment" upon persons "*justly* chargeable with *no* crime," for they are without *guilt*. And all these forms of "the malediction" are "transmitted to Adam's posterity," as the necessary and *unavoidable* fruits of that original "covenant," of which God was the author, as both Arminius and Watson affirm. Thus, this Arminian covenant inflicts dreadful penalties upon the *guiltless*—even upon helpless infants. And they are *unavoidable* as the time and place of their birth.

\* For July, 1839.

But while the "Methodist Magazine" teaches that "the offspring of Adam are *unavoidably* involved in the *temporal* consequences of the first sin, without being *involved in its guilt*," as just stated, the reviewer shrinks with horror from the thought that "one man or a single child of our fallen race" "is liable to *eternal punishment* on its account." And to say that one such person "ever finally perished, merely through the imputation of Adam's sin," he denounces as "a blasphemous imputation on the character of God." But, here is a confounding of two things essentially distinct —to be "*liable to eternal punishment*," is one thing, and to "*finally perish*" is an entirely different thing. The *liability* "merely through Adam's sin," Calvinists maintain; but "*the final perdition*" of any soul for the same cause alone, is no part of our creed. Besides, the reviewer here comes in direct conflict with the ablest standard writer in the Arminian ranks. Mr. Watson reasons conclusively as follows: "The *justice* of this (viz. "*eternal death* from the federal character of Adam") is objected to; but it is sufficient to say, that if the making the descendants of Adam *liable to eternal death* because of his offense *be unjust*, the infliction of *temporal death* *is so also*; the duration of the punishment making no difference in the simple question of justice. If punishment," he adds, "whether of *loss* or of *pain*, be unjust, its measure and duration may be a *greater* or *less* injustice, but it is unjust in every degree."\* This reasoning is perfectly conclusive, and places the reviewer in a bad predicament. If "*liability to eternal death*" on account of Adam's sin, be *unjust*, so, reasons Watson, must be "*the infliction of temporal death* on the same account." Now, as the reviewer maintains the latter, *i. e.* "*the infliction of temporal death*," he must necessarily admit the former, viz. "*liability to eternal death*." "The fact," says Watson, "of infants being born liable to *temporal death*, a part of

\* Institutes, vol. ii. pp. 55, 56.

the penalty, is sufficient to show that they *are born* under the whole malediction," viz. "death—temporal, spiritual and eternal." Thus, as he well reasons, by admitting the justice of temporal death, "we are in precisely the *same difficulty* as when the legal result is extended farther," viz. so as to include "liability to eternal death." Yet, of these same children of Adam, Bishop S. and Mr. Foster say: "They were born corrupt, and so cannot be *guilty* for this." So that "the whole malediction" rests upon the *guiltless*! Such are some of the confused, incoherent and contradictory statements put forth by these Arminian brethren. Such, a few of the curious logical results of this attempt to interline the Arminian scheme with scraps of Calvinism! The best method of escape from this entanglement, is to say, with some earlier Arminians, "That which we have by birth, ("birth sin,") can be no evil of sin," &c. "Infants are simply in that estate in which Adam was before the fall." Or, take the Pelagian ground, "Adam's sin hurt no one but himself!" "And death is threatened as a benefit to mankind!" It is needless to enlarge further upon the proofs of this singular feature of the Arminian scheme, viz. *punishment without guilt*. We must not omit, however, one other extract, which we take from Dr. Fisk, the ablest American writer on the subject, as follows: "*Guilt is not imputed* ("to man born depraved,") until, by a voluntary rejection of the gospel remedy, he makes the depravity of his nature the object of his choice."\* But, if this be true; if "*guilt is not imputed*" to children until they become old enough to choose or refuse "the gospel remedy," why do they suffer the penalty of "temporal death?" Why are they subject to the "privation of the image of God," as Arminius assures us, and which he terms "*a punishment?*" If "*guilt is not imputed to them,*" how

\* "Discourse on Predestination and Election," p. 30, Meth. Tract, No. 131.

can they be “born under the whole malediction,” as Watson affirms. Did David teach this doctrine: “Behold! I was shapen *in iniquity, and in sin* did my mother conceive me?” Did Paul teach that men are born *guiltless*? Of Christians of his day, he says: “We all were, *by nature, children of wrath*, even as others.” Yet, according to the Arminian scheme, “*guilt* was not imputed to them,” though they were, “*by nature, children of wrath!*” Indeed, as Watson most conclusively reasons, if these guiltless *children* may suffer “temporal death,” with equal certainty may they suffer “eternal death”—“the measure or duration of the punishment may be a greater or less injustice, but it is *unjust* (and of course, impossible with God,) in every degree.” It follows, therefore, that if Arminians taught the “horrible doctrine of infant damnation,” they would not more surely charge the Creator with *injustice* than with their present notions, viz. “that corruption, misery and death are the sad inheritance of infants,” while they are chargeable only with “sin which they *could not avoid*,” or, rather, “*guilt* is not imputed to them at all!”

Thus, by the plain showing of its own most zealous defenders, the Arminian scheme is convicted of this great inconsistency, viz. “punishment without guilt;” *i. e.* “punishment without any *just* liability to suffer!” Other strange features of the scheme we reserve for future Letters.

## LETTER III.

ORIGINAL OR BIRTH SIN—ITS RELATIONS TO THE ATONEMENT—MEN BECOME SINNERS ONLY BY FREE GRACE.

REV. SIR—We propose now to examine with some care the logical relations of “Original or Birth Sin” to the Atonement. The Scriptures abundantly teach that “Christ died for our sins”—“died the *just* for the *unjust*, to bring us to God.” But it is demonstrable on Arminian principles, that the Redeemer came into the world, not “to save men from sin,” but rather to put them into a capacity of sinning, since it is only in consequence of his death and the *grace* revealed in it, that *guilt* becomes chargeable upon any individual of the race, except our first parents. In proof of this position, observe the following: 1. All the posterity of Adam are born with “a corruption of nature,” whereby they are “inclined to evil, and that continually.” 2. These sore evils are as *necessary and unavoidable* as the event of natural birth. 3. No person is “to blame for a (corrupt) nature which was forced upon him; to which he never consented, and which he never could avoid. His first parent may be to blame, but he *cannot be responsible*.” “No being in the universe can censure him;”\* since it would be to blame and punish a person chargeable only with necessary and unavoidable sin, destitute of freedom of will, and “morally incapable of a good choice.” 4. But through the *grace* abounding in the Atonement, “the destructive effects of derived depravity are counteracted.”† Man’s “freedom of will” is restored; he is “*graciously* assisted to make a voluntary (*i. e.* a *sinful*) choice,” and he thus becomes responsible and blame-worthy. But if no remedy—no *grace*—had been provided, man’s condition as a fallen creature “would

\* Foster’s Objections to Calvinism, p. 124.

† Dr. Fisk, p. 30.

have been his *misfortune*, not his *fault*, and he would have been no more to blame than *for having red hair*.”\*

Now, if these things are so, then it is plain that, independently of the death of Christ and the grace of the gospel, we could never have been chargeable with sin; and of course Christ did not die to atone for the sins of any of the fallen race, except our first parents, since, *but for his death and the grace accompanying it*, no others could have sinned, or at least, their sins being unavoidable, they would not have been “responsible” for them. But if this is so, it will follow that the “*grace of the gospel*,” instead of being any real favor toward mankind, is the *greatest curse* that could ever befall them. If, without the bestowment of grace, men could not have been held “*responsible*” for their conduct, they would have remained free from criminality; the righteousness of God could never have suffered them to be sent to hell; and his goodness, we may suppose, would have bestowed upon them eternal life. But now, alas! in consequence of the coming of Christ, and of *grace* being given them to deliver them from *unavoidable* sin and “*merciless tyranny*”—now they are all exposed to inexcusable blame and endless ruin!

Again: If this derived depravity be *necessary and unavoidable*, where was the “*grace*” in Christ’s dying to “counteract its destructive effects?” If we must suppose “the shedding of blood” in some way necessary to save man from being held “*responsible*” for *unavoidable* corruption; or in other words, to save him from “*merciless tyranny*,” it would seem rather an act of *justice*, both to God and the creature. The Lord of the whole earth OWES it to himself to DO RIGHT. To say, then, that “through the GRACE of the gospel all are born free from a condemnation” which none but a *tyrant* could execute, is to confound all distinction between those *rights* which eternal justice exacts, and

\* Reply to Fairchild’s “Great Supper,” p. 34.

the unmerited favors which grace freely bestows. It is in fact to resolve the whole scheme of mercy into the payment of a DEBT, at least, so far as it respects all the offspring of Adam. But we need not say how utterly subversive is such a view of the first principles of the gospel, which is continually represented as the blessed fruit of the most distinguished love, as the “unspeakable gift” of pure, unmerited mercy. Thus does Dr. Fisk’s great argument against the doctrine of decrees (whether correctly or incorrectly applied, we inquire not now,) recoil upon himself. Like him of old, who defied the armies of Israel, Arminianism loses its head by the stroke of its own favorite sword.

That these are legitimate deductions from Arminian premises, is obvious. “It has been established,” says Watson, (vol. ii. p. 67,) “that the FULL PENALTY of Adam’s offense passed upon his posterity.” And he elsewhere admits that “Paul represents ALL MEN under *condemnation*, in consequence of their connection with the first Adam;” and, again, that “by one man’s disobedience many were made, constituted, accounted and dealt with as sinners, and treated as though *they themselves had actually sinned*;” p. 397, 54, 55. The *full penalty* which has passed upon all men to their condemnation, he represents (p. 55,) as consisting in three things. 1. “The death of the body.” 2. “Death spiritual”—“thus it is, the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” 3. “A third consequence is, *eternal death* ;” or, as the language is varied on page 399, “a conditional liability to eternal death.” Now, it will scarcely be denied that these are evils of the most awful character that can befall mankind, being nothing less than death temporal, spiritual and eternal. And we are told that they have passed upon men, as the “full penalty,” or righteous “condemnation” of Adam’s offense, in consequence of a connection with him which they could not escape, if they were born at all. Here, then, is a *triple curse*, including death tempo-

ral and spiritual, and a liability to eternal death, which no descendant of Adam has power to shun, and which is visited upon every child of his, "on account of sin" which is absolutely "unavoidable," in consequence of his connection with his first parents. We leave Dr. Fisk and his admirers to inform the public, whether this be the arrangement of a most "merciless tyrant;" or whether, in their zeal against Predestination, they have not digged a ditch and fallen into it themselves.

Again: The three-fold penalty which has passed upon all men on account of *unavoidable sin*, we are further told by Watson, is relieved by the fact that "all are born under a constitution of mercy, which actually existed before their birth;" vol. ii. p. 398. "A constitution of MERCY!" Mercy for what, and for whom? Why, for men who are implicated in sin, for which, Dr. Fisk says, none but a tyrant could hold them "responsible," it being "*unavoidable*." We submit to these gentlemen the task of showing the infinite MERCY and *grace* of the plan by which men are saved from the penalty and condemnation of the Divine law; while at the same time they assure us, that to leave them in that state would be an act of high-handed injustice and "*tyranny*." Truly, grace is no more grace, according to this scheme. It is hardly strict justice, or the payment of a *moral debt*. It supposes the most merciful God to create men under an arrangement or constitution by which *all* are plunged into an abyss of *unavoidable sin* and condemnation to death and misery. It then supposes him to provide a "constitution of mercy," by which *only some* are saved; whereas, if they had been only left to themselves, and no *mercy* and *grace* provided, they would have been "inclined to evil, and that continually;" of course they would have "had no freedom of will left," and could not have been held "responsible" for their sins! Thus, all men would have been blameless and harmless, without rebuke, and *justly*

exposed to no misery, either in this world or the world to come.

It will not relieve the Arminian scheme, to say with Dr. Fisk and the General Conference, that Adam was our “federal head,” and that “by his unnecessitated sin, he and *in him* all his posterity became obnoxious to the curse of the Divine law.”\* This is true. It is sound Calvinism, viz. that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death has passed upon all men, for that (or *in whom*, Adam) all have sinned.” Rom. 5 : 12. John Wesley, too, seemed, at least at times, to understand this subject: “The sufferings of all mankind (including infants) which are entailed upon them *by the sin of Adam*, are not the result of *mere mercy* (as Taylor of Norwich taught) but of *justice* also. In other words, they have in them the nature of *punishments*, even on us and our children. Therefore,” continues Wesley, “children themselves are not innocent before God. They suffer; therefore they DESERVE TO SUFFER.” † But what will Bishop Simpson and Mr. Foster say to this? Their doctrine is—“They were *born corrupt*, and so *cannot be guilty* for this—they remain unregenerate, and are *not to blame* for this, because it was entirely without their consent.” ‡ Very different this from Wesley: “They suffer—therefore they deserve to suffer!”

The great cardinal truth, that Adam was “the federal head and representative” of the whole race, solves the mystery of infant guilt and suffering in the Calvinistic scheme. No principle of government is more universally recognized and approved than that which involves millions, especially women and children who have no voice in their election, in the responsibilities incurred by their representatives; as in war, and other heavy liabilities and sore calamities. But

\* Discourse on Predest. p. 3..

† Doctrine of Original Sin, part 3, sec. 2.

‡ Objections to Calvinism, p. 166.

what relief will the representative character of the first man bring our Arminian brethren? It simply enables them to remove the knotty entanglement a little farther back. It exhibits the God of infinite mercy as constituting a federal relationship between Adam and his posterity, in virtue of which "death temporal, spiritual and eternal," are visited upon them as the "full penalty" of sin which, as to all the descendants of the first pair, was absolutely *necessary* and *unavoidable*, and for which they are "no more responsible than for having red hair;" or, as Bishop S. and Mr. Foster express it, "they were born corrupt and so cannot be guilty for this," &c. Thus the "merciless tyranny," which they so earnestly denounce and charge upon Calvinism, is reduced to a system. It is provided for by a Divine "covenant," as Arminius and Watson term it; it is executed in *the order* of nature and providence originally enstamped upon creation! And to crown the whole scheme of contradiction, "a constitution of mercy" is introduced, the results of which are, to make the children of men responsible and guilty, and *justly* exposed to the curse; and thus "the grace of the gospel" proves to be a far greater evil than the original calamity! If there had been no *grace*, according to this scheme, there could have been no sin, no punishment, no suffering, no sorrow among the posterity of Adam! Of course, there was every reason of benevolence why Adam should have had posterity. "The state of all mankind," says Mr. Wesley, "did so far depend on Adam, that by his fall they *all* fall into sorrow, and pain, and death spiritual and temporal. And all this is *no ways inconsistent* with either the *justice* or goodness of God." This is sound Calvinism; but he immediately adds a *proviso*: All this is perfectly consistent "with the *justice* and *goodness* of God :" "PROVIDED, all may recover through the second Adam whatever they lost through the first." But if this be so, then it is the coming of the second Adam, "and *the grace* of the gospel," which alone vindicates "the *justice* and good-

ness of God" in the fall of Adam's posterity "into sorrow, and pain, and death." But as God is supremely *just* and *good*, there could, of course, have been *no such fall*, if there had been no "second Adam"—and no "grace of the gospel."\* Thus the offspring of Adam are indebted to *pure grace* for this dreadful "*fall* into sorrow, pain and death;" which otherwise would have been neither *just* nor *good*, and so altogether inconsistent with the character of the righteous Ruler of the universe ! Thus we reach the strange conclusion, that to Divine *grace* alone we must trace these sorrowful calamities which afflict mankind, these wide-spread and desolating ruins of the fall ! Nor does it help the matter in the least, that this scheme supposes the all-wise Creator to have entered into "a covenant" with Adam, including certain terms and conditions, involving certain consequences upon himself and his posterity in the event of his fall ; but that to suppose "the Judge of all the earth" to carry into effect those terms and conditions, which *he himself had prescribed*, would be an impeachment of both "his justice and goodness!" So that nothing less than the sacrifice of God's own Son, the infinite *grace* of that exalted victim, is sufficient to relieve the eternal throne of such a stain and "justify the ways of God to men." Can this be the true idea of gospel GRACE, viz. a compensation for the hardships, the injustice, the cruelty which mankind must have suffered from the first covenant, if they had been doomed to endure precisely what an infinitely just and good God had threatened to inflict ?

All the leading authors on the Arminian side of the question admit, and several of them largely demonstrate, that the original threatening : "*in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*"—included both Adam and his posterity. Thus Wesley : "In and through their first parent, *all his posterity died in a spiritual sense* (not merely a *temporal death*)

\* For the foregoing extract from Wesley, see his work on Original Sin, part 3, sec. 6.

as Taylor had argued). By this “one man, sin entered and passed upon all men.”\* Of course, this was threatened in the “covenant” with Adam. Watson also conclusively proves that “death eternal” was involved in the same threatening. “In or through Adam, *guilt* (exposure to just punishment) came upon all men.”† Thus far their scheme is Calvinistic. But how do they reconcile this including of Adam’s offspring under the curse, with “the justice and goodness” of God? Why, says Adam Clarke, “God provided a Redeemer.” And but for this *provision* “it would have been UNJUST to *permit them* to propagate their like in such circumstances that their offspring must be unavoidably and eternally wretched.” ‡ But this is the same as to say, that the all-knowing, most wise and true God made a *threatening*, which both his justice and goodness *forbid him to execute!* And, of course, it follows, that He *never intended* to execute it! For how could God *intend* to execute a threatening, which would be an impeachment of his attributes of justice and goodness? As well may we affirm that He makes *promises* which He cannot in *justice and goodness* perform, and which He never *intends* to perform! But this is sheer blasphemy.

It is plain, therefore, that the position which “*the grace of the gospel*” holds in the Arminian scheme is this—to make it *right* and good for God to execute his threatenings, which otherwise would have been unjust and cruel—*threatenings* which he never could have *intended* to execute, because they were contrary to his justice and mercy! The whole scheme is therefore resolved into the payment of a **DEBT** to the injured creature, and it is absurd to say with the Apostle, “*the grace of God bringeth salvation.*” He should rather have said, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable *justice*, which pays the righteous demands which mankind have upon

\* Original Sin, part 2, sec. 1.

† Clarke’s Com. on Rom. 5:14.

‡ See his Com. on Rom. 5, near the close.

him for the *injuries* they suffered under the original threatening, “*thou shalt surely die!*” Such are some of the strange inconsistencies—to use no harsher term—of Arminian grace!

That we have correctly understood the Arminian scheme, is further evident from the following argument abridged from Watson: “It is not denied that the will in its purely natural state and independent of *all grace*, *can* incline only to evil. But the question is, whether it is so left, and whether, if this be contended for, from *whatever cause it may arise*, whether from the influence of circumstances or co-action, or from its own *invincible depravity*, it renders him PUNISHABLE who never had the means of preventing his will from lapsing into this diseased state, who was born with this moral disease,” &c. “We reply,” says Watson, “that this is *only true* when the time of trial is past, as in devils and apostates; and *then only* because they are *personally guilty* of having so vitiated their wills,” &c. “They themselves are *justly chargeable* with this state of their wills and all the evils resulting from it. But the case is widely different with men who, by their hereditary corruption, and the fall of human nature, to which they were not consenting parties, are born with a will averse to all good.”\* But if this be a correct view of the case, it follows necessarily that if men had been left in that “purely natural state,” and the children of Adam had been born without any interference of GRACE, without any atonement, they could not have been “*held to be culpable*;” “they would not have been “PUNISHABLE” for original depravity, nor “for any of the evils resulting from it.” So that if the posterity of Adam had only been so fortunate as to have had *no grace* provided for them, not a soul of them could have been *culpable*, or *punishable*. Thus it is to *grace* we must impute all the guilt and misery which have ever befallen men, excepting only our first parents, who became sinners without grace. And even Adam and

\* Institutes, vol. ii. pp. 437, 438.

Eve, as we will presently show, could not have committed, according to this scheme, more than the *first* transgression, inasmuch as it is expressly affirmed that they thereby *lost their "freedom of will,"* which was restored *by grace!* From all which it follows that "the grace of the gospel" was indeed a great *favor*, so far as respects the pardon of the *first* sin, but that ever since, it has been "*evil and only evil continually!*"

But perhaps the Arminian will reply, that but for the grace provided in the atonement of Christ, Adam must have speedily perished, and of course could have had no posterity. "Had our first parents," says Watson (vol. ii. p. 395), "died '*in the day*' they sinned, which, but for the introduction of a system of mercy and long suffering, for any thing that appears, *they must have done*, the human race would have perished with them," &c. And on page 398, he speaks of the opposite opinion as a Calvinistic "assumption"—"one of the great and leading mistakes" of the Calvinists, and as great presumption to assume it as a truth, that they would have multiplied their species only for eternal destruction. But if Arminians correctly describe their own system, it is obvious that, so far as respects the *posterity* of Adam, the probability of their existence would have been at least as great without *grace* as with it. Without "the grace of the gospel," as they explain it, mankind would have been neither *culpable* nor *punishable* for their conduct, as Watson himself affirms. They would all have been born in a *guiltless* state, where they would deserve neither blame nor punishment for original depravity; and "they could not have been held to be culpable for any of the evils resulting from this *invincible depravity,*" "because their wills could have inclined only to evil." It is folly, therefore, to talk of "multiplying their species for eternal destruction." They would have been *multiplied* in a perfectly guiltless state, deserving neither blame nor punishment. And certainly such a state would have

been no less worthy of the Supreme Ruler, than the present state of things; viz. an arrangement of Arminian *grace*, in which they are “shapen in iniquity, and *in sin* do their mothers conceive them;” and worse still, only a part of these “children of wrath” are certain to be saved, while thousands were known to the Divine Mind as infallibly certain to be miserable for ever for their sin. It is plain, therefore, that on this scheme, it would have been *far better*, it would not have been *unjust* at all, as Dr. Clarke affirms, but both righteous and good, “to permit them to propagate their like in such circumstances,” and without any “system of mercy,” which on Arminian principles only had the effect to render them justly “punishable” and exposed to endless destruction. Nor does this doctrine of Arminian *grace* harmonize more logically with other aspects of the subject. In regard to Adam, Watson affirms that the sentence, “In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die,” was to be executed “*in the self-same day* of the transgression;” in other words, Adam must have died, and so could have had no posterity. But Dr. Clarke says it means “literally, *a death thou shalt die*. From that moment thou shalt become mortal and shalt *continue in a dying state* till thou die. This we find *literally accomplished*.”\* So also, President Edwards has shown conclusively, that the expression among the Hebrews, “*in the day*,” does not necessarily signify immediate *death*, or that the exaction of the sentence should be within *twenty-four hours* from the act, particularly not the punishment in its full extent.” The force of the phrase implies (1.) “*a real connection* between the sin and the punishment, as in Ezek. 33 : 12, 13.” (2.) “That Adam should be exposed to death by *one transgression*, without a second trial. 1 Kings 2 : 37. Solomon says to Shimei: *On the day* thou goest out \* \* \* thou shalt know for certain *that thou shalt SURELY DIE*, i. e. he should be liable to death for the first offense.” (3.) “Be-

\* Com. on Gen. 2 : 17.

sides," reasons Edwards, "God did not oblige himself to execute the punishment in its utmost extent *in that day*. It was in part executed immediately. Adam lost his innocence, died spiritually, became corrupt, miserable, helpless, mortal."\* "Adam," he continues, "was *that day* subjected to the curse of the law and condemnation to eternal perdition." "In the language of Scripture, he is *dead*, *i. e.* in a state of condemnation to death; just as the believer immediately 'hath *eternal life* abiding in him,' *i. e.* hath the *beginning* of eternal life. So there was nothing in the threatening that bound God to execute the full punishment at once, nor any thing that determined that Adam should have no posterity." All these things were reserved in the power of the Creator. So, in like manner, the believer, who "hath *eternal life*," will at death and judgment receive a vastly greater degree of the same gracious reward. And the angels that sinned, did not receive their *full* punishment, which is reserved to the end of the world. These examples show that it is in perfect harmony with other Divine dispensations, both of goodness and severity, that Adam should be permitted to live, though threatened with death.

But suppose we adopt Watson's view, viz. "that the sentence of death ("temporal, spiritual and eternal," as he explains it,) was to be executed in the *self-same day* Adam fell." The first and immediate consequence, we are assured, would have been the entire loss of "freedom of will." And though this loss—Adam having "had his trial, and become *personally guilty* of having vitiated his will"—would not have exempted *him* from being justly chargeable with sin; his *posterity*, according to Watson, "being born with a *will* averse to all good," would not have been "punishable." Besides, as the original law did not demand *instantaneous* punishment, but would have been satisfied with the execution of its threatening at any time "in the day" of

\* Original Sin, p. 436.

transgression, it can never be shown that the same sovereignty which might justly have granted a respite of *a day*, could not have added a month, or a year, or many years, to beings who would have propagated a race of men meriting neither *blame* nor *punishment*. But whatever we may think of this matter, it is plain that Watson's great argument against "the Calvinistic assumption" must fall to the ground. On Arminian principles, it is evident the offspring of Adam could never have *sinned* at all, if they had not become sinners *by grace*!

Further: The Arminian notion of the freedom of the will implies "indifference;" or, in the language of President Edwards, "that equilibrium whereby the will is free from all antecedent bias." But, owing to the fall, man becoming "inclined to evil and that continually," could have no such freedom of will; therefore, he was no longer a free agent; therefore, he could commit no more sin, for none but a free agent can violate a moral law. Hence, mankind must have fallen into a state resembling "sinless perfection." Watson admits the fact of this loss of freedom and of capacity to good or evil. Hence, he quotes Arminius, affirming that "the will of man, with respect to true good, is *captivated, destroyed* and *lost*, and has *no powers whatever*, except such as are excited by grace." He also calls this condition of the will "an *invincible inclination to evil*;" and maintains that "in its purely natural state," "the will CAN incline only to evil." Of course, as he affirms, on Arminian principles, they could have sinned no more if "the *grace* of the gospel" had not stepped in to render mankind blame-worthy, and expose them to sin and its punishment.\*

As to the case of our first parents (to say nothing of the

\* This singular notion that man by the fall lost his "freedom of will," and became a sort of *machine*, appears to be quite a favorite feature of Arminian theology. Thus: "One of the first and unconditional results of *this grace* (of God) was the endowment of man with *free will*, \* \* \* that attribute in man which constitutes him a *fit subject* of rewards and *punishments*, \* \* \* a proper *subject of moral government*." Por-

fallen angels), it might be argued that they, too, having lost their “freedom of indifference,” and having become corrupt and “inclined to evil continually” and invincibly, could have sinned no more. But he replies, that “the original act being their own and in their power, they were justly chargeable with the state of their wills and all the evils resulting from it.” This conclusion is by no means self-evident. Suppose a man of choice to deprive himself of reason, would he be bound to perform moral acts, of which he has become utterly incapable; or could he be punished for not performing them, and made to suffer eternal torments for the neglect, just as though he were in possession of all the necessary powers of moral agency.\* The same reasoning applies to the case of our first parents, after they had lost their freedom of indifference. Their *first* sin must have been their *last*, but for grace!

That we have not been drawing a caricature of the doctrinal views of Arminian Methodism, is further apparent from the following extracts from the stereotyped volume of doctrinal tracts, which were originally bound with the Discipline. “We say, man hath his freedom of will, not naturally but *by grace*.” “We believe that in the moment Adam fell, *he had no freedom of will left*.” And after quoting Baxter and the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, ch. 9—“God hath endowed the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity determined to good or evil”—the writer (Wesley) adds—“Sure, here is as much said for free will as any man needs

*ter's Compendium of Methodism*, pp. 288, 289. This is the same as to say that, but for gospel *grace*, Adam and all his posterity would not have been “fit subjects of either rewards or punishments!” Again: “The human family would be completely *unmanned*.” Of course, they would have been “mere machines.”

\* For an able discussion of this point, the reader is referred to the “Biblical Repertory,” conducted principally by the Professors at Princeton, N. J. See the July No. 1831.

to say, and perhaps more." In other words, the Presbyterian doctrine says *all that need to be said* on the subject. This candid admission of their great chief, should silence "the hard speeches" which are so commonly and fluently uttered against Presbyterians, denouncing us as denying free-agency, and representing man as a mere machine, which acts only as it is acted upon.

Among the great lights of modern Arminianism, perhaps no writer stands higher than Dr. Adam Clarke, the author of the Commentary. In addition to the quotations already given, the following are his sentiments upon the topics now under review: "Had man been left just as he was when he fell from God, he in all probability had been utterly unsalvable; as he appears to *have lost* all his spiritual light and understanding, and *even his moral feeling*." "As they (Adam and Eve) were, so would have *been all their posterity*, had not some *gracious principle* been supernaturally restored to enlighten their minds, to give them some knowledge of *good and evil*, of *right and wrong*, of *virtue and vice*, and thus bring them into a salvable state."\* But if this be a true statement, our first parents, having sunk into a condition in which they had "no moral feeling, no knowledge of right and wrong," were no longer moral agents. Of course, they could perform neither holy nor unholy acts; they could sin no more, until *grace* restored their freedom, and enabled mankind to commit all the sin that has flowed from the first transgression. Thus God is represented as the author of all sin since the fall! The society of devils, moreover, according to this theory, is as pure from actual sin as that of the angels around the eternal throne! Nor is it conceivable that, on this scheme, there can be any punishment of a sinful being, who in the act of sin has blotted out conscience, moral feeling, and all sense of right and wrong, unless there be also *punishment by grace*!

\* Discourses, p. 77.

The result of the whole is, that we have original sin which is no sin—depravity without fault, “inclination to evil” without criminality, the penalty of the law inflicted upon those who are not subjects of law, and wondrous “grace” to deliver us from a punishment which we do not deserve !

And now, most reverend and worthy Bishop, permit me, in closing this Letter, to retort the language which you have commended as applicable to our system : “Truth constrains us to say, we have found what appears to our mind great confusion, perplexity and contradiction, arising out of the difficulties of the (Arminian) doctrine.” \* If you can invent any method of scriptural exegesis or logical reasoning by which it is possible to reduce this chaos to order and harmonize its repulsive and discordant elements, you will do more to earn an earthly immortality than all those who have preceded you in the same cause.

In our next Letter we hope to close the discussion of the important topic of Original Sin and its relations.

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## LETTER IV.

ORIGINAL OR BIRTH SIN.—STATE AND PROSPECTS OF INFANTS.—SCRIPTURAL VIEWS OF DEPRAVITY.—FREEDOM OF WILL NOT INCONSISTENT WITH THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF THE CONTROL OF MOTIVES.

REV. SIR—In order properly to understand the relations of “Original Sin” to the state and prospects of infants, especially such as die before they are capable of moral action, let us look briefly at several points which are conceded by Arminians.

i. “The *full penalty* of Adam’s offense passed upon all

\* Foster’s Objections, p. 29.

his posterity." *Watson's Inst.* vol. ii. p. 67. Of course, as he affirms, "*the threatenings* pronounced upon the first pair have all respect to their posterity as well as to themselves." p. 52.

ii. "The provision made in the gospel does not affect the state in which men are born—the fact of their being born liable to (temporal) death, a *part* of the penalty, is sufficient to show that they are born under the *whole malediction*." *Watson*, vol. ii. pp. 66, 58.

iii. "If it was righteous to attach that *penalty* to man's offense, it is most certainly righteous to execute it." vol. ii. p. 100. Of course, it would be "righteous to execute the full penalty" ("death temporal, spiritual and eternal,") upon "the posterity of Adam."

No language could express more plainly the positions of Calvinists, than the three items just quoted. No terms could utter more explicitly the great scriptural truth, that by the fall, all mankind are under "the wrath and curse" of God—"are born under the *whole malediction*"—and, of course, infants, as part of that "posterity," are justly liable to suffer "the full penalty."

But is not this the same as teaching the horrible doctrine of "infant damnation?" By no means. Men may be *liable i. e. justly exposed* to great evils, which they will never suffer. So it was with all the redeemed now in glory, and so it was and is with all who die infants. Through "the *grace* of the gospel," they are washed, sanctified and saved. No Calvinist, so far as known to us, has ever denied this blessed and consolatory truth. Even Calvin, in reply to the objection that "infants who are incapable of believing, remain in their condemnation," replies thus: "I oppose a contrary argument. All those whom Christ blessed are exempt from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God. And as infants are blessed by him, it follows that they are exempted from death."\*

\* *Inst. vol. ii. p. 520.*

But the point of divergency where the two schemes of doctrine separate is this: On what *principle* are infants saved? Arminians affirm, as was shown in our last Letter, that “the provision of a Redeemer” was demanded as a matter of right, otherwise the full execution of the threatening on the posterity of Adam would have been palpably *unjust!* The gospel, therefore, was a *remedy* for the severity, injustice and cruelty with which God’s covenant threatened the children of Adam! Of course, the Arminian idea of *grace* is the *payment of a just debt!* To speak of the gospel as a method of *grace and mercy*, when both justice and goodness would have been sacrificed if the offer of salvation had been withheld, is the most absolute folly.

These remarks will prepare the way for a series of observations on the subject of the state and future prospects of infants.

1. The Romish doctrine represents the salvation of infants as dependent upon baptism. Hence Papists make it the duty even of women, the nurse for example, to baptize a new-born child, if death should be imminent.\* Hence they have their *limbus infantum*, a place somewhere between heaven and hell, where unbaptized infants are supposed to remain in a state of insensibility. A sentiment nearly resembling this was held by some of the earlier Arminians, such as Episcopius, Curcellaeus and others, who taught that persons dying in infancy always remain in an infantile state, having no more ideas in the future world than they had in this. Neither early nor later Calvinists have ever held such an unworthy doctrine as this, or one approaching so nearly to “infant damnation!”

2. Even Watson, though for the most part calm and decent in stating the views of his opponents, affirms that the Calvinistic system “brings with it the repulsive and shocking

\* In his controversy with Hughes, Dr. Breckinridge hinted the actual existence of *ante-natum* baptism among Romanists.

opinion of the eternal punishment of infants." Bishop Simpson and Mr. Foster think there is "abundant evidence" of the truth of the *charge*.\* With a great show of candor, however, they add that "this horrible doctrine is *now* so universally disclaimed, that *we suppose* a reformation has been wrought, &c." This great change among Calvinists they ascribe to "the exposure of the horrors of the system" by Arminians! But it so happens that the same unworthy artifice was employed by Fletcher in his fourth *Check*, nearly *ninety* years ago: "Calvinists," he tells us, "are *now* ashamed of consigning infants to the torments of hell." This was written in 1772. If the Bishop and Mr. F. have read the fourth Check, they ought to have known that *their "now"* is nearly a century out of date, and proves to be an old Arminian stratagem, altogether unworthy an honorable controvertist.

If the Calvinists of former or latter times were chargeable with this revolting dogma, we have not discovered the evidence in their writings. Francis Turretine, one of the distinguished theological successors of Calvin at Geneva, published his system of Theology a hundred years before the time of Fletcher. In the only place which we have noticed where he speaks of the prospects of the infants of "infidels and pagans," he says: "Christian charity bids us hope (*nos jubeat sperare*) that *they are saved*." And in reply to the objection that "without faith it is impossible to please God," Turretine says: "They (infants) please God on account of the *satisfaction of Christ* imputed to them for *remission of their sins*, though themselves incapable of apprehending him by faith." And again, he quotes Matt. 19:14, "Of such is the kingdom of God." "For although they are adduced as an example of humility for adults, yet Christ includes (not excludes) *infants themselves* in the promise."† No doubt

\* Objections to Calvinism, p. 209.

† Inst. Theol. Locus 15. Quæstio 14. The work is the text-book at Princeton, and a standard authority throughout the world.

there was a Fletcher or a Foster of Turretine's day, to practice the same small *ad captandum* artifice, viz. "Calvinists have now become ashamed of consigning infants to hell!" So also Mr. Toplady, who died in 1778, one of the most able and decided opponents Wesley ever had. No man ever suspected him of a disposition to *disguise* any opinions he might think worth holding. Yet on this very subject of "infant damnation" he says: "I testify my firm belief that the souls of all departed infants are with God in glory—that reprobation hath nothing to do with them." Again: "Such as die in infancy are *all undoubtedly* saved."\* And Dr. John Owen, whose first work was published in 1642, says: "It follows unavoidably, that infants who die in infancy, have the *grace of regeneration* and as good a right to baptism as believers themselves."† And that eminently pious and judicious commentator, Dr. Scott: "Infants are as capable of regeneration as grown persons. And there is ground to conclude, that all those who have not committed actual transgressions, though they share in the effects of the first Adam's offense, will also share in the blessings of the second Adam's gracious covenant."‡ Hundreds of similar testimonies might be adduced, but these should suffice to admonish Arminians of the importance of committing to memory the commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

It is humiliating, indeed, to find even so sober a controversialist as Watson, guilty of a similar unworthy artifice: "That some under the sentence of reprobation, die in their infancy is, *probably*, what *most Calvinists allow*." Observe how guarded—"probably what most Calvinists allow!" Just enough said to convey the broad *innuendo*, but not enough to alarm *conscience* with the thought of uttering an *untruth*! Again, he says: "If their doctrine be received, it

\* Works, pp. 58, 142.

† Works, vol. xxi. p. 550.

‡ Com. on Matt. 19:14.

(the death of infants who are reprobates) *cannot be denied.*" But this is mere reckless assertion without the shadow of proof. There is no feature of the doctrine of Election which requires us to believe any infant to be lost. It is just as easy and logical to believe all who die in infancy to be of the *elect*, as to believe all who *die regenerate* to be of the elect. Calvinists *can* and *do* deny the reprobation of the one class, just as consistently as the other. Viewing the race as one great family of "the lost," it is perfectly natural and logical to hold that all who die infants are "chosen in Christ from the mass unto eternal glory"—just as easy as to believe that He who gives and takes life at his pleasure, *can* manage the affairs of his providence so wisely that this result shall be infallibly secured. If our Arminian brethren cannot comprehend so plain a deduction, it is their fault, not ours.

3. One of the strangest mysteries of this feature of the Arminian system, will appear in the following contrast:

"All are born under the whole malediction."—*Watson.*

"Derived depravity is damning in its nature."—*Fisk.*

"By the obedience of one (Christ), righteousness is imputed to all infants, and they stand *justified* before God"—"they are in a state of favor or justification."—*Fletcher.*

"Every punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offense for which he is punished, otherwise to punish him would be palpably unjust."—*Wesley.*

"They are born free from condemnation."—*Fisk.*

"They were born corrupt, and so cannot be guilty for this."—*Foster.*

"As to infants, they are not, indeed, born *justified* and regenerate. Original sin is not taken away, as to infants, by Christ."—*Watson.*

"The guilt or the *punishment* of Adam's sin is charged upon his whole posterity, a main part of which *punishment* consists in that original (unavoidable) *defilement*, in which they are born."—*Goodwin, approved by Watson.*

This curious contrast, extracted from the ablest publications of the General Conference, teaches that infants are born under the *curse*, but not under condemnation—are justified, but *not pardoned*—are punished, but suffer no punishment—are originally *defiled*, and thus suffer "palpable injustice."

4. But no such mystery hangs around other statements from the same source : "All are born," says Wesley, "under the guilt of Adam's sin, and all sin *deserve* eternal misery." "Infants, too, die ; therefore, they have sinned—by original sin." But here arises the question : How are these infants to be saved ? "In the *ordinary way*," replies Wesley, "they CANNOT BE SAVED, unless this stain be washed away by baptism." "The *benefit* is to be received through baptism in particular, to which God hath tied us, though he has not tied himself." "Indeed, where baptism *cannot be had*, the case is different ; but *extraordinary cases* do not make void a standing rule."\* This appears plain enough. Without baptism, no infant can ordinarily be saved, unless in extreme cases, where baptism *cannot be had !*" What, then, becomes of the thousands of infants who die unbaptized, but who might have had baptism if their parents had desired it ? And to fix the meaning beyond doubt, we are told : "It is certain, by God's word, that children who are *baptized*, dying before they commit actual sin, are saved." The *baptized* are "certainly saved"—but then what becomes of the unbaptized, of whom we are told : "It has been proved that this original stain cleaves to every child, and that thereby they are 'children of wrath,' and liable to *eternal damnation*." These were the sentiments of Wesley ; and his followers publish and circulate them widely. If they wish to discover "infant damnation," let them look at home ! It is obvious that thousands die in infancy unbaptized, but who lived where "*baptism could have been had*." Of course, "their stain was not washed away by baptism," and we are assured that, "in the *ordinary way*," such infants "CANNOT BE SAVED." Now, as such infants do not fall under "the *extraordinary cases*," they are infallibly *lost* ! There is no method of avoiding this logical conclusion.

5. It has long been a favorite device of sectarian bigotry

\* Doctrinal Tracts, pp. 246. <sup>et seqq.</sup>

to misrepresent and hold up to detestation the views of the Presbyterian church on this topic. Finding that the uniform tenor of the writings of our leading authors and preachers furnish no foundation for their imputations, Arminians have labored hard to torture our Confession of Faith into some declaration such as would suit their purpose. We are charged with the everlasting perdition of infants, chiefly on two grounds :

(1.) "The Confession no where expressly affirms that all who die in infancy are saved." But, neither does the Methodist Book of Discipline teach that doctrine. Of course, it follows that the preachers must hold "infant damnation!" And what renders this more probable is, that they are taught in their form of baptism to say that "all men are conceived and born in sin," and "to call upon God, the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he will grant to *this child that which by nature he cannot have;*" that he would "*wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost;*" and that he (the child) "may be delivered from *God's wrath.*" Now, does not all this plainly prove that they regard the CHILD as an object of God's wrath ; and that if he were to die in that state he would be lost? Does it not further prove that the preachers believe *the child* in danger of such an awful fate? else why should they pray so fervently for his deliverance from it—that is, a deliverance from a fate which could *not possibly* befall him? In other words, why should they pray that God would not hold *the child* under his wrath; that he would not do a thing which, themselves being judges, would be "*palpably unjust,*" and which would exhibit him as a "*most merciless tyrant?*" A strange sort of prayer, truly! How evident, therefore, is it, that whatever the preachers may say, their own Discipline inculcates "*infant damnation!*" (2.) A second ground of the charge against Presbyterians, of teaching that some infants dying in childhood are lost, is, that our Confession employs

the phrase, “elect infants,” which is said to imply that some who die in childhood are non-elect. Not to repeat what has been often said, that the objected phrase is perfectly consistent with the persuasion that *all* infants dying in infancy are elected or saved by grace from among the lost family of mankind, and of course that they will not be wanting when the “Son of man shall gather his elect from the four winds of heaven” (Matt. 24: 31): not to urge the fact that the Scriptures nowhere, in *so many words*, reveal the salvation of all such, though giving many sweet and precious intimations of the truth of the doctrine: let us try the force of this Arminian battery upon its authors. The Methodist Book of Discipline (Form of Baptism, p. 105,) employs a phraseology similar to that of our Confession: “Grant,” say they, “that *this child*, now to be baptized, may ever remain in the number of thy faithful and *elect children*.” This of course cannot refer to election to national privileges or family immunities—but, as the term “elect” is applied to a particular individual, it must mean “*personal election*.” And, as they most violently maintain that this necessarily implies the opposite reprobation, it follows that the terms “elect children” unavoidably teach the horrible doctrine of “reprobate children.” Thus, this heavy artillery of Methodist Arminians recoils upon themselves. A few victories of this sort will ruin their cause. And to add to the mystery of the transaction, the very “*elect child*” then being baptized, is in danger of becoming a reprobate, and, of course, of *being lost!* The proof is at hand—the preacher as he performs the service, is required to pray most fervently, that *the child* may *remain* one of the elect—“ever *remain* in the *number* of thy faithful and *elect children*,” i. e. not become a *reprobate* and perish! So evident is it that the Discipline teaches the *horrible* doctrine of “infant reprobation.”\*

\* The venerable Dr. L. Beecher, in speaking of the calumnious charge made against Calvinists, of holding “infant damnation,” says: “I have

But there is still a greater mystery connected with this subject. We are accused by our opponents with maintaining that *some* infants are forever lost. We think, however, that on the principles of Arminian Methodism, *no infant can possibly be saved*. What is salvation? Does it not imply deliverance from the guilt, pollution, and just punishment of sin? Are not infants declared (Meth. Discip. p. 103,) to be "conceived and born in sin," and of course, under its guilt and pollution? Are not these evils *unavoidable*? And is it not repeatedly affirmed in the standard writings of Methodism, that for God to hold his creatures responsible for what is *unavoidable*, would be "palpably unjust," and worthy the government only of a "merciless tyrant!" What then are infants to be saved from? From an act of "palpable injustice" on the part of their Judge? From the grasp of a "merciless tyrant?" Most manifestly, therefore, on these principles of Methodism, NO INFANT CAN BE SAVED, simply because *no infant needs salvation!* With respect to all the vast multitude of the human family who have gone down to the grave, not knowing "their right hand from their left," Christ "*has died in vain.*" Their song will not be, "Unto Him that loved us, and *washed* us from our sins in his own blood"—for they never stood in need of "washing." Their song will rather be, "Unto Him that by His providence cut short our days, and *SAVED* us from living any longer in the body—which was the greatest evil we had any reason to fear! Thanks be to Him, who thus snatched us from exposure to Arminian grace, which would have restored our 'freedom of will' and made us responsible sinning creatures and liable to everlasting torments! Thanks never seen or heard of any (Calvinistic) book which contained such a sentiment, nor a man, minister or layman, who believed or taught it. And I feel authorized to say that Calvinists, as a body, are as far from teaching it as any of those who *falsely accuse them*. Such persons should commit to memory without delay the ninth commandment—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

be to death, the king of terrors, who delivered us from such a scheme of grace, from such a system of mercy. Or rather, if we owe any gratitude at all, it is because we have received no more than bare *justice*—that which was our righteous due, and which a holy God could not have withheld—‘for we were born corrupt, and cannot be guilty for that!’”\* Such, on strict Arminian principles, would be *the song* of infants in heaven!

Before closing this Letter, let us look for a few moments at the scriptural view of the subject, which is involved in so many strange contradictions.

The tendencies of the Arminian scheme are plainly to “reproach our Maker.” In the “covenant” made with Adam, that system represents God as “a hard master.” To execute the terms of that covenant upon the posterity of the fallen pair, would have been injustice, cruelty, &c. To shield the character of the Lawgiver from these righteous and true imputations, was the object of “the system of mercy!” The *gospel*, God’s greatest and best gift, is, after all, only a fair and equitable “compensation” for outrageous wrong! To heal this outrage, “whatever was forfeited in the first Adam, has been either restored or compensated for by the second Adam.”† Thus, the “Holy One of Israel” wipes away the stain which otherwise must have blotted the purity of his government.

Calvinists, on the other hand, view “the covenant” with

\* Objections to Calvinism, p. 166. In another place Mr. Foster says: “How was he to blame for an existence and nature which were forced upon him—which never at any period he consented to, and which he never could avoid?” It is to be regretted that our Methodist brethren are verging so rapidly toward the Pelagian scheme of Taylor of Norwich, who was also an Arian. President Edwards quotes him as follows: “If we come into the world infected with sinful and depraved dispositions, then sin must be *natural* to us; and if natural, then *necessary*; and if necessary, then *no sin*; \* \* \* nor can it in any respect be our fault, being *what we cannot help*.” Even Mr. Wesley solidly refuted these fundamental heresies of Taylor. See his work on “Original Sin,” in reply to that arch-heretic.

† Meth. Quart. Rev. April, 1854.

Adam as like all others of God's works, originally "very good." "But our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God." \* "By the disobedience of one, many were made sinners." "Adam," says Watson, "is to be regarded as a public man, the head and representative of the human race." † "By the offense of one, judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation." Was this a harsh, cruel, unjust arrangement? Far from us be such blasphemy! As Wesley well remarks, "That deadly wound in Adam" prepared the way (created the necessity) for "the greatest instance of Divine love." Besides, it was the shortest way for man to obtain everlasting happiness. By this method, one man's perfect obedience for a short time, would have secured eternal life to all mankind; whereas, had each stood bound for himself, it must have remained in suspense to many at least, until their personal probation had expired; and no one can tell how large a number would have failed in the trial and perished for ever; perhaps more than now perish.

This method also appears *reasonable* and *kind*; because it was the *safest method*. As Wesley has truly observed: "Unless in Adam all had died, being in the loins of their first parent, every descendant of Adam *must have personally answered for himself to God*. It seems to be a necessary consequence of this, that if *he had once fallen*, once violated any command of God, there would have been no possibility of his rising again; there was no help; but he must have perished without remedy." "Who would not rather be on the footing he is now? Who would wish to hazard a whole eternity upon one stake?" "Where then is the man that presumes to blame God for not preventing Adam's sin? Should we not rather bless him from the ground of the heart for therein laying the grand scheme of man's redemption?" ‡

\* Shorter Catechism, Q. 13.      † Watson's Instit.

‡ See his sermon on "God's love to fallen man."

Adam was obviously the most proper person to be the covenant head of all mankind. As their common parent, he was equally related to all, and had the strongest motives and best opportunities to persevere in perfect obedience. The most wise, holy, just and good God having chosen him for their head, none of his posterity, if they had been all alive and on the spot, could without attempting to be wiser than their Maker, have refused their cordial consent. Would it have been either *more wise* or *more merciful*, to have ordered that each individual should enter the world in the immaturity of his being, while yet his faculties of body and soul were in the imperfect and undeveloped state, *then*, to stand his trial for weal or woe; or that one should be appointed, strong and vigorous, in all the perfection of that original manhood, which the all-wise God pronounced “*very good*”—that *such a one* should be given us, in whose hands should be placed our destiny, and by whose conduct should be decided the future character of his posterity? Could every child of Adam have looked on when the scheme was ordained in the councils of eternity, true modesty would have dictated the right answer to these inquiries. And had the result been the establishment of the whole human family in perpetual holiness and happiness, every tongue would have celebrated the wisdom and extolled the benevolence of so wise and wonderful an arrangement.

Another topic in this connection, deserves a little further notice. Arminians, with all their talk about “derived depravity,” its “damning nature,” &c. plainly teach that a man born with a sinful disposition, a depraved nature, is born with such a *necessity* of sinning as perfectly excuses him. To relieve men of this inherited *necessity*, and in part restore these original ruins of the fall; in a word, to impart “freedom of will,” and make man a blame-worthy creature, is, in their view, one of the great and blessed results of “the *grace* of the gospel!” Wonderful *grace*, indeed,

which takes away man's just and righteous excuse, and makes him guilty and justly condemned ! But it is not true that because we are born with corruption of nature, we are therefore excusable for it. This notion of Arminians is inconsistent with the common sense of mankind. We often say of a person of a savage, malicious, murderous disposition, "it is just like him, and like his father and grandfather before him. They were always naturally a brutal and ferocious family. And this son is a worthy child of such parents." But does this ever strike the common mind as a sufficient *apology* for murder, rape, arson ? If a man do a murderous deed, instigated by a cruel and revengeful disposition, we make no inquiry whence he derived that disposition, or what it was that originated his murderous choice. And the more determined and impulsive *this bent of the will* for murder, the more atrocious the act, even though he developed a thirst for blood in childhood ! Such is the common judgment of all mankind. The disposition may have been transmitted as a constitutional bias from father to son ; but that rather *aggravates* the crime than offers an apology for it. Apply the same reasoning to the inherited depravity of our fallen nature. "There is not," says an eloquent writer, "a more effectual way of bringing this to the test than by supposing one man the object of great provocation and injustice from another. Let a neighbor inflict upon you some moral wrong. Do you pause to inquire whence he has derived the selfishness or the malice under which you suffer ? If it be under *some necessity* which *violates and thwart*s his disposition to do you a kindness, you feel no resentment, no spirit of retaliation. But if he be incited by the strength of his depraved passions—say a *malicious disposition to do you harm*—so far from this furnishing an *apology*, you feel that the obstinate *tendency or bias* of his will to injure you, only adds to the turpitude of his conduct. The more hearty the will, choice, or impulse you saw he had to hurt or traduce or defraud you, the more would

you hold him to be the culpable subject of your most just and righteous indignation.\* This is unquestionably the only true and common sense view of the subject. The stronger a man's bent or inclination to do evil, the more wicked his act. And whether this inclination, bent or bias of the mind, be derived from an immediate parent, or through a line of twenty generations of malicious and evil disposed ancestors, or from Adam himself, alters not the nature of the act. That advocate would render himself ridiculous, who should plead before a jury for the acquittal of the deliberate murderer, on the ground that he had inherited a murderous bias from his parents, and therefore could *not avoid* the crime! If these be correct conclusions, they invalidate the labored dissertations of Arminians,† on the subject of *necessitated will, coerced volitions, unavoidable choice, &c.* Mr. Fletcher, though not often very discriminating, caught a glimpse of the truth, when he wrote as follows: "All we assert is, that whether a man chooses good or evil, his will is free, or it *does not deserve the name of will.*" And he afterward quotes with strong approval as his "very sentiments," the following: "God does not force any man to will either good or evil; but man, through the corruption of his understanding, naturally and *freely* wills that which is evil."‡ This is sound doctrine, but modern Arminians utterly reject this view. Man's corruption, they tell us, destroys his "freedom of will;" his inherited depravity is attended with a bias, or bent of inclination to evil, which is a perfect *excuse* for his crimes, if such they can be called! It is the province of "free grace" to disarm corruption of its power in all, so far as to make them sufficiently free to become guilty and righteously condemned!

\* Abridged from Dr. Chalmers on Rom. 5.

† The Arminian doctrine is, that man's natural or inherited depravity, corruption, or tendency to sin, destroys his liberty and would make him excusable, if grace had not interfered to restore his "free will."

‡ See his fourth Check.

Messrs. Simpson and Foster labor with great zeal to convict our system of "absolute necessity," and call it "fate," "blasphemy," "infinite absurdity," &c. They ridicule the idea that "motives exercise a controlling force over us."\* We admit that the word *force* might be understood to convey an idea altogether inconsistent with freedom; for, as Fletcher truly says, "will is free, or it does not deserve the name of will." Yet we read of the *force* of argument, the force of reasoning, &c. But what is the meaning of the word *motive* in connection with acts of the mind? Watson defines it: "Not physical causes, \* \* \* but *reasons* of choice, *views and conceptions* of things in the mind, \* \* \* in consideration of which the mind itself wills and determines.† Very well. But do not *motives*, i. e. *reasons* of choice, *views and conceptions*" of what is most reasonable, right, fitting, desirable—do not these and similar *reasons* "control," i. e. govern, determine, decide the choice of the mind.‡ Certainly they do in all rational beings. The opposite is true only in the case of persons who have been deprived of *reason*! It is evident, therefore, that Messrs. Foster and Simpson have adopted a *theory of will* which suits only that unfortunate class of beings who have lost the balance of their minds, and whose will or choice is not "*controlled by reason!*" The only college on earth where this sort of *liberty* is taught and exemplified in its perfection, is an insane asylum; for only there the choice or preference of the soul is governed by no "*reasons—no views and conceptions*" of what is right, reasonable, rationally desirable, &c.! There the inmates decide *without*, and even *against* reasons.

The doctrine of necessity, i. e. of the *certainty* that the mind will act in a particular way under certain circum-

\* Objections, &c. p. 228.

† Inst. vol. ii. p. 440.

‡ The *motive* is that particular consideration which being presented to the mind DETERMINES *it to act*.—Meth. Mag. July, 1839, p. 259.

stances, is simply this—"Every *rational* and well balanced mind will *certainly* and freely choose that which, on the whole, under any given circumstances at the time of action, appears to its reason and intelligence *to be fittest and best.*" The strength or power of these "*reasons, views and conceptions,*" in other words, of these *motives*, is so far from destroying man's *liberty* of will, that they are of the very essence of moral freedom—for without such *reasons*, he is insane and utterly irresponsible! It is obvious then, that volitions are not *necessitated*, except in the sense of their future certainty, *i. e.* they are not forced, in the sense of constraint or compulsion. "The idea of *compelling* a man to hate or love any object, is perfectly absurd. \* \* \* That every one will choose that which, on the whole, in the act of choice, *he prefers*, is certain." This is only to say that the mind chooses what it does choose. To assert that the mind chooses in any act of will, what in that act it does *not prefer*, is only to say that it chooses contrary to its choice—which is a contradiction." A man may, indeed, perform external actions by constraint, *i. e.* contrary to his preference or choice—but that is another thing entirely.

But, say Messrs. Simpson and Foster: "Is not every man conscious to himself that his former course of (wicked) conduct might have been different from what it was—that, under precisely the same circumstances, his volitions and acts might have been different?"\* In the sense we suppose intended, this is not denied. The whole obscurity arises from confounding *certainty* with physical *necessity*. When Calvinists speak of *necessity* in matters of the will, they mean *certainty of existence*. To illustrate the importance of this distinction, take the following example: "If a man of plain sense should be informed by prophecy that he would certainly kill a fellow-man the next day or year, and that he would be actuated by malice, it would never enter his mind that he should not be

\* Objections, p. 230.

guilty of any crime, because the action *was certain* before it was committed. But, if you change the terms and say that he would be under *a necessity* to perpetrate the crime; that, being absolutely certain, he could not possibly avoid it; immediately the subject becomes perplexed and involved in difficulties—for every man of common sense feels that he cannot be justly accountable for actions which *he could not possibly avoid*; and that, for what he does from absolute necessity, he cannot, in the nature of things, be culpable. These terms include the idea of a compulsory power acting upon us, not only without, but in opposition to our own will. A necessary event, in this sense, is one which cannot be voluntary or free; for if it were spontaneous, it could not be *necessary*; these two things being diametrically opposite.” \*

Agreeably to this reasoning, a *voluntary* action may be as certain of *future existence*, as a *voluntary action* that has already taken place is certain of *past existence*. The absolute certainty of David’s adultery, for example, does not now forbid its being a voluntary action; so, neither, did the absolute *future certainty* of the same act (or, what Calvinists mean by *necessity* in moral things,) forbid its being voluntary and blame-worthy, though infallibly known to the Divine mind a thousand years prior to its commission, or even from eternity.

“A voluntary action may therefore be as certainly future as any other. If an action be voluntary, it is free, and the idea of a *necessary*, or, as Arminians say, a *necessitated* volition, is absurd and contradictory.” † And as regards the influence of a natural *bias or bent* of the mind to destroy its freedom, no one can doubt that in the holy soul of the man Christ Jesus, this bent or bias to virtue and holiness was perfect, unchangeable; and his will infallibly certain as that of God himself, always to choose in one way. If the term

\* Biblical Repertory for 1831, pp. 159, 160.

† Ibid.

*necessity* is ever allowable when speaking of the will, we might say that God is *necessarily* holy and just and true in all his volitions and actions—yet such a use of the term would be obviously improper, if anything more were meant than perfect and immutable certainty to do right.

Every one is familiar with the fact that the influence of *motives*, *i. e.* “reasons, conceptions or views in the mind,” depends, to a great extent, upon the temper or frame of the mind: and nothing is more common than for men to regulate, moderate, and by long practice to gain the mastery over perverse tempers and inclinations. If, for example, the temper of the soul be toward the indulgence of hatred or malice against a neighbor in any given case, a very small and trifling “reason or conception” of wrong received, will lead to violence and even to murder—because “the reason,” in that frame of the soul, appears very strong. But to another person, and, indeed, to *the same man* in other states or frames of the mind, the “reason,” and of course the act, will seem perfectly contemptible, and he will be amazed at his own folly. Now, as man is responsible for the frame or temper of his soul, which often makes “the worse appear the better reason,” so is he responsible for the strength or “controlling power” of the “conception” or *motive* which persuaded him to commit any crime—say murder, as in the case supposed.

But, replies the Arminian, does not this doctrine suppose *necessity*, *i. e.* that man acts without freedom? Certainly not. It supposes the man to be a *rational*, intelligent being, liable, indeed, to the influence of bad frames, habits or tempers of mind. It further supposes, not that he always acts under the impulse of “reasons” which are *really* the wisest and best, but he acts from those motives which at the moment impress him as the best and most fitting under all the circumstances. In a very short time, indeed, he may correct his error and curse his folly, because the frame or temper of his mind having changed, “the reason and conception,” *i. e.*

the *motive*, loses its persuasive power. But, as these frames, habits or tempers of the mind form the ground-work of the *intentions*, they, to a great extent, make the act what it is in morals.

We agree with Fletcher, therefore, that to talk of a *necessitated* will or choice, in the sense of co-action, is to talk nonsense. Such a use of the terms is absurd—just as it would be to talk of logical affections, or a round square, or a dark light, or a loving hatred, or any other absurd collocation of terms. A man may be *necessitated* to a bodily action *against* his will—but the will itself is of its own nature always free, and the *motives*, *i. e.* “the *reasons* or *conceptions*” which lead to choice, are essential to the rational nature of the mind—without them it is neither sane nor morally responsible. And the strength of these motives is very much, in any given case, what a man makes it.

But here the inquiry may arise: How far is the Divine Being concerned in original depravity and the acts which flow from it? No Calvinist teaches that God *infuses* sin into our nature. As a just punishment of the original fall of our first parents, man has lost original righteousness—and the consequence, *viz.* depravity of nature, invariably follows. This was true of Adam, and is true of his posterity—as like produces like. And as regards the sinful actions—say of the murderer or adulterer, Wesley makes the following distinctions: “God supplies such a wicked person with the *power* to act, which he cannot have but from God; he does this *knowing* what he (the murderer) is about to do. God, therefore, *produces the action* which is *sinful*. It is his *work* and his *will* (for he works nothing but what he wills), and yet the *sinfulness* of the act is neither his *work* nor *will*.”\* Calvinists take no stronger ground than this.

And then, as regards those frames, tempers and habits of the soul, which are the fruits of original depravity—in an-

\* Original Sin, part 3, sec. 7.

swer to Dr. John Taylor's inquiry—"Can those propensities be sinful, which are neither caused nor consented to by me?" Wesley replies: "Spite, envy, and those other passions and tempers which are manifestly discernible even in little children, are certainly not *virtuous*, not morally good. And these exist before they are consented to, &c. 'Tempers contrary to the nature and law of God are *natural*,' i. e. inherited as part of our nature. These tempers do exist in us antecedent to our choice." "Actual sins," adds Wesley, "may proceed from a corrupt nature, and yet not be *unavoidable*. But if actions contrary to the nature of God were *unavoidable*, it would not follow that they were innocent."\* In these instances, Mr. Wesley was refuting the doctrines of that celebrated Pelagian, Taylor of Norwich, who bitterly denied original sin. This fact accounts for these and similar statements from his pen. Messrs. Simpson and Foster would do well to take a few lessons from him on that topic. They would thus discover that they agree much more closely with the Pelagian Taylor than with Mr. Wesley. Far from him be such sentiments as the following: "Neither are they *to blame* for this, because it was entirely *without their consent*. They were born corrupt, and so cannot be guilty for that."† Mr. W. refutes with great force of logic, the same sentiment expressed by Taylor, in pretty much the same words! Whatever may have been his errors, Wesley could say with David and others—"Behold I was shapen in *iniquity*, and in *sin* did my mother conceive me." "The carnal mind is *enmity* against God, for it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." "And we (Christians) were *by nature* children of wrath, even as others." This is not the language of men who taught—"They were *born* corrupt, and therefore could not be guilty!"

These are strange developments in Arminian theology.

\* Miso. Works, vol. ii. p. 278.

† Objections to Calvinism, p. 166.

The system appears to be passing into the frozen regions of Pelagianism. The scraps of sound doctrine which at first adhered to it, and which, like salt, for a time preserved the mass from putrefaction, are becoming more and more unpalatable to the leaders. If they continue thus to "walk in the counsel" of Pelagians, and "stand in the way" of such errorists as Taylor of Norwich, they may soon be prepared to "sit down" with scorners such as Belsham, Priestley, *et id genus omne*. But we hope better things of Arminian Methodism, though we thus speak.

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## LETTER V.

### FOREKNOWLEDGE—PREDESTINATION.

REV. SIR—The volume which your Book Concern has published and which you have recommended as "very valuable," "of great merit," &c. occupies more than a hundred pages with the subject of "eternal decrees," "election and reprobation." The views of Presbyterians are caricatured as follows: "The doctrine is, that God decreed"—"in the sense of *originator, author and cause*"—"whatsoever comes to pass"—"each particular sin of every man." "Murder, robbery, blasphemy, &c."—"they could no more *avoid* these crimes, than resist the fiat of Omnipotence"—"their creation was *in order* to their sins." \* We have selected these items as furnishing a *comparatively mild* statement of our views, as Messrs. Simpson and Foster understand them.

The quotations you profess to make from certain authors, in order to fasten upon our church this and similar blasphemy, have already been exposed in part; and, in general, are much in the style of your favorite tract: "Dialogue between a Predestinarian and his friend." As a minute examination

\* Objections to Calvinism, p. 31.

of the extracts professedly given by Wesley, the author of that tract, will be found in the Appendix, we refer the reader to it, for *fair* specimens of Arminian accuracy and reliability in matters of this sort.

The great theological work of Calvin, "the Institutes," has always been one of the principal magazines whence have been drawn these weapons of Arminian warfare. Yet in publishing this work, our Board of Publication, as we have shown, make several distinct *exceptions* to his views, especially on Reprobation. Even admitting, therefore, what is far from the truth, that Calvin's views are correctly stated by our Arminian brethren, how absurd in them to employ hundreds of pages in contending with such "a man of straw!" If any body could be found in any church under heaven, willing to father the sentiments which the Bishop charges upon us, Mr. Foster's book might possibly be of some use in *that particular quarter!* But, as the matter now stands, every well informed Presbyterian will feel only amazement, that so much good paper and ink have been worse than wasted in battling with a pure figment. We repeat, the *Supralapsarian* theory, grossly caricatured as it is in these "Objections to Calvinism," is not the scheme of doctrine held by the Presbyterian church. It cannot be questioned that Turretine, John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, and a host of other Calvinists, have always been admitted, even by Arminians, to be men of the first order of genius. And they all agree that such representations of our doctrines as we have quoted from your "Objections," are *calumnies*—that "God is not, and *cannot be*, the author of sin;" and they express with Calvin their "deep abhorrence of such blasphemy." \* No wonder, therefore, that in attempting to fasten such blasphemous sentiments upon Presbyterians, the Rev. R. S. Foster finds "great confusion, perplexity and contradiction" in the Calvinistic doctrine; but he humbly hopes it will not be charged to his

\* Calvin's Letter to Bullinger, January, 1552.

“willful blindness!” \* No, we rather think Mr. F. did the best he could. But intelligent men will be apt to suspect that Mr. F. has imagined “contradictions,” only because he was incapable of comprehending the scheme of Calvinism—of tracing its logical relations, or perceiving its legitimate results.

With these preliminary remarks, we take up a second source of Arminian Difficulties—that mysterious perfection of the Divine nature, according to which “known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world.”

## II. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIAN METHODISM IN CONNECTION WITH THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE.

The Foreknowledge of God seems never to have been a favorite in the body of divinity current among Arminians. Long before the days of Wesley, such early anti-Calvinists as Episcopius and others, called it “a troublesome question”—“a thing disputable, whether there be any such thing or not, though possibly it may be ascribed to God”—they say, that “it were better it were *quite exploded*, because the difficulties that attend it can scarcely be reconciled with man’s liberty”—and that “it seems rather to be invented to *cru-cify* poor mortals than to be of any moment in religion.” † So also, Vorstius, another great prophet of their own, affirms “that God oft times feareth, suspecteth, and *prudently conjectureth* that this or that evil may arise”—and others, “that God doth often *intend* what he doth *not foresee* will come to pass.” To such daring extremes were these men driven in their zeal to set aside the doctrine of Predestination.

“This troublesome question,” appears also to have given no small annoyance to Mr. Wesley. He seems to have con-

\* Objections, p. 29.

† Dr. Owen’s “Display of Arminianism,” p. 71. The original Latin is there quoted.

founded Foreknowledge with Omiscience. In his sermon on Predestination he says, "If we *speak properly*, there is no such thing as Foreknowledge or After-knowledge in God"—and one of his modern disciples adds doubtfully, "If we may apply the term Foreknowledge to the Deity." We are disposed, however, to think that Peter spoke quite as "*properly*" as either, when he said "with the eleven," "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and *foreknowledge* of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." And again, 1 Pet. 1:2, "Elect according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father," &c. The founder of Methodism had sufficient discernment to perceive, that the fact of the Divine mind comprehending all time and all eternity at one glance, and as present in one view, does not in the least relieve the difficulties which beset the subject of Foreknowledge. Hence in writing to Dr. Robertson, in answer to the inquiry, "How is God's foreknowledge consistent with our freedom?" he candidly replies, "I cannot tell."\* And in his essay on Original Sin he says, "My understanding can no more fathom this deep (how God produces the nature which is sinful without willing sin), than reconcile man's *free will with the foreknowledge of God*."†

The atheistical sentiments above quoted from the early Arminians, we have no right to charge upon Bishop S. and his brethren, unless they avow them. Nor will Christian charity permit us to accuse them of "duplicity" and "artifice," because they do not *print and preach* such "strictly logical" inferences from their avowed principles.‡ These logical perplexities, however, which candor and fairness have extorted, including those from Wesley, are important. It is well known that it is a common contrivance of his followers

\* Misc. Works, vol. iii. p. 219.

† Ibid, vol. ii. p. 277.

‡ We leave such carnal weapons to Bishop S. and his brethren who have published such tracts as "Duplicity Exposed," &c. &c.

to decry and denounce Calvinism on this identical ground. "It is impossible," they say, "to reconcile the doctrine of decrees with man's freedom;" and they are exceedingly abundant in pointing out the dreadful consequences which flow from this alleged fact, and in showing that all Presbyterians should at once forsake the faith of their fathers, and come over to the Arminian camp. But if we were to admit their allegations against our system to be true to the full extent, yet the question returns—"What advantage hath the Arminian? or what profit is there in Methodism?" Has not your "great master of logic," as you call him, declared that he "cannot tell" how your own doctrine of Foreknowledge can be reconciled with our freedom? First cast out this beam from your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to extract the mote from ours. Honestly show us that you hold and teach only doctrines which can be maintained consistently with human liberty, and then *we will believe you sincere*, when you attempt to preach down Calvinism as destructive to the doctrine of man's freedom and accountability.

The Scriptures are so express, and the prophecies are so plain and form so essential a feature of Divine revelation, that modern Arminians have not been able to resist the overwhelming evidence of the infinite foreknowledge of God. Hence, in a leading tract they say—"To know is so essential to God, that the moment he ceases to know all that is, will be, or might be, under any possible circumstances, *he ceases to be God.*"\* They evidently feel, however, that such a statement is attended with very serious embarrassments. "Should it be asked," inquires another of their ablest writers, "how entire freedom of action agrees with this knowledge, I answer, I cannot tell." "The plain truth is, the subject is too far removed from the province of our faculties and the sphere of human science, &c." "We must rest till it shall please God

\* Fisk on Predest. and Election.

to develope what has been hitherto locked up in the treasury of eternal wisdom.” \*

The Gordian knot which our Arminian brethren find so perplexing, was readily solved, or rather, was *rudely cut* by Socinus and his followers, thus: “God made no other decree than that of saving such as believe, obey and submit to the gospel. These things depend on the human will—what depends on the will *is uncertain*: an *uncertain* object cannot be an object of *certain* knowledge: God therefore *cannot* certainly foresee whether my condition will be eternally happy or otherwise.” †

Most Arminians of the present day will agree with us that this is stark atheism! Who can believe in a God who every day is learning something new—who is ignorant to-day of what will occur to-morrow?

Again: In speaking of “human or contingent actions,” the Methodist Magazine ‡ doubtfully remarks—“*If God foresee or foreknow them at all*, he sees them just as they *are*.” “He sees at the same time what class of *motives* or principles will preponderate,” &c. Exactly so—but where did the reviewer learn that the Calvinistic system “confounds”—“makes no distinction between” “foreknowledge and decree?” Any Calvinist who should broach such an absurdity, would hardly be considered a fit candidate for a class in a Sabbath school. There are indeed some Methodist authors who affect to see no difficulty in reconciling freedom and foreknowledge. Mr. Watson, however, candidly admits that “this forms a difficulty”—for example, “how to reconcile the Divine warnings, exhortations and other means adopted to prevent the *destruction* of individuals, with the certain foresight of that *terrible result*.” “In the case of man,” he acknowledges, “the infallible prescience or foreknowledge of

\* Meth. Mag. vol. iii. p. 13.

† Saurin, vol. ii. p. 108.

‡ For July, 1839.

failure would, in *many* (all?) cases, paralyze all effort.”\* Nothing was ever more truly said—and if he had only recalled to mind, that the Arminian holds it as an essential feature of his scheme, necessary to shield the Divine character from foul and blasphemous aspersions—(viz. “insincerity,” “crocodile tears,” &c.) that the omniscient God *designed*, planned, purposed the salvation of such lost ones and expended the most astonishing and inconceivable means and efforts to secure this end, even the incarnation and sufferings and death of his eternal Son—if Mr. Watson had seriously contemplated how unworthy a reflection it casts upon the all-wise God, to employ all these infinite and unspeakable means to secure a result which was *already infinitely certain NOT TO TAKE PLACE*—it might have led him wisely to caution his Methodist brethren against the supposition that their scheme of doctrine is the privileged Goshen of *light*, while all around hangs Egyptian darkness! We desire to speak it with the deepest reverence for the Divine character, but it ought not to be disguised that Arminianism in this aspect of the system, represents the all-wise Saviour as suffering and dying—for what? why, with a *design or intention to disappoint his own infallible foreknowledge!* *Absit blasphemia!* The Socinian boldly cuts this knot—“God *cannot* certainly foresee man’s voluntary actions or his destiny!”

The pressure which all intelligent Arminians feel at this point of their system, is not obscurely indicated by their unavailing struggles to relieve it from its difficulties.

“Certainty,” says Watson, “is no quality of an action at all; it exists properly in the mind foreseeing and not in the action foreseen.” “When, therefore, it is said, what God

\* Theol. Inst. part 2, ch. 4. The extreme caution of some Arminian authors on this subject, is curious: “Did not God foreknow who would reject the gospel and be lost? We presume he did!” *Porter’s Compendium*, p. 231.

foresees will certainly happen, nothing more can be reasonably meant than that *He is certain* that it will happen; so that we must not transfer the certainty from God to the action itself."

This is ingenious, but sophistical. It is not true, as Watson affirms, that the proposition—"What God foresees will certainly happen"—can mean no more than that He is certain it will happen. That is all that the proposition refers to *God*—but a very little reflection will satisfy any one that the terms have also a direct reference to the nature and existence of the action itself. "Certainty" is as really "a quality of an action," as uncertainty or contingency, which are essential to the notion of Arminian liberty.

To make this obvious, we will take the example of David's murder in "the matter of Uriah." No one will question that *now* that wicked act is infallibly certain—a fixed fact, so that the proposition which affirms its *past* existence, is infallibly true; *so true* that no mathematical axiom can be more so; true as that twice two are not twenty; and *true* apart from the *perception* of its truth by any mind. This we think no Arminian will hesitate to concede.

But there was a period, a thousand or ten thousand years before David's crime, when it was just as *infallibly known* to the Infinite mind, as it is now. No one can doubt this. At that period, the proposition which affirmed the *future* existence of David's act of murder was just as infallibly true, apart from any *perception* of its truth, as the other which now affirms its *past* existence. And if we suppose God to have communicated the knowledge of that *act* to the angels a thousand years before it took place, they would have felt that its *certainty* was an infallible feature of David's existence, but in no way dependent on their perception of the truth—in other words, its *certainty* of future existence belonged to the act, not to their mental perception of the act. And if, for any period within the one thousand years antecedent to David's existence, we were to adopt Dr. Clarke's no-

tion — suppose it possible for the Divine Being, say for twenty-four hours, “to choose not to foreknow” David’s crime, would there be no *certainty* of its future existence for the same length of time? Or now that the act is done, suppose it possible that God for one year should “choose not to know” it, would its *certainty* then cease? So it would seem, if Watson is correct. These statements, if we mistake not, show conclusively that there is a certainty of existence and of truth, which belongs to morals as well as mathematics, and which is altogether distinct from the certainty of *perception* in the mind which conceives the truth or foresees a future moral act, so that the certainty belongs not so much to the mind as to the act itself.

It appears demonstrable, therefore, that the infallible foreknowledge of God implies the infallible certainty of the future existence of that which is foreknown. Of course, we cannot suppose the future volitions of moral agents, known as they are to God with perfect distinctness and with all their circumstances, to be uncertain. This would be to say that he certainly knows an event will infallibly be, while at the same time he knows it to be so uncertain that it *may not be*, *i. e.* he knows that he may be mistaken! In other words, he knows the proposition which affirms the future existence of an event, *to be certainly true*; and yet he knows the same proposition to be so *uncertain* that it may be untrue! If the event be indeed uncertain that is known to the Divine mind, how then can he *know* it to be certainly future? Of course, his foreknowledge would be mere conjecture! For how can he know the certainty of an event, and at the same time know its uncertainty?

But, replies the Arminian, “God’s foreknowledge can have no more influence in causing an event, say the sinner’s impenitence and ruin, than our after-knowledge.” “To foresee an event does not *cause* it to take place.”\* Very true; no

\* Compendium of Meth. p. 222. Meth. Mag. July, 1839.

Presbyterian will dispute that point. Foreknowledge in God *proves*, not causes, the *certainty* of the event foreknown. All infallible knowledge, whether it be foreknowledge or after-knowledge, *demonstrates* the thing known to be infallibly certain, *i. e.* that the event, action, volition, perfectly does or will correspond with the knowledge. Such is the infallible truth in the case. Knowledge is founded in certainty; but the cause of the certainty is another matter, and not now under consideration. We maintain, and we trust have proved, that the Arminian doctrine of infinite foreknowledge in God, carries with it and demonstrates the infallible *certainty* of all the future volitions and moral conduct of men; unless God may mistake and his knowledge be mere conjecture. The same certainty attends the doctrine of Decrees; they render the free evil actions of men certain, but exert no *causative* or compulsory influence. Man, as a moral agent, performs all his actions in connection with the all-wise and perfect *plan* of the Infinite One. But God is not the author of his evil actions, except as before explained by Wesley, viz. "He supplies the power whereby the sinful action is done. God, therefore," he adds, "produces the action which is *sinful*. It is his *work* and his *will* (for he *works* nothing but what he *wills*). And yet the *sinfulness* of the action is neither his *work* nor *will*."\* This is sound Calvinism, understanding by the term "*will*" God's efficient design or purpose. Yet we cannot deny, if we believe the Scriptures, that God also restrains, bounds, governs and directs the evil actions of the wicked for the wisest and holiest ends and objects; although they think not so, but have far other objects in view. Thus, in the case of the crucifixion of Christ—"he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; yet was by *wicked hands* crucified and slain."

Take another view of the connection of foreknowledge with the certainty of future events. There must be a certainty in

\* Original Sin, Works, vol. ii. p. 277.

things themselves, to be the ground of their being certainly known. For how is it possible infallibly to know or discern the certainty of things or events, if there be no certainty in those events to form the ground of this certain knowledge? We admit, therefore, that “the Divine foreknowledge does not *cause* the event;” and taking Dr. Fisk’s view, that “God knows an event, *because it is certain*,” \* this only more plainly proves the certainty of that event. “It demonstrates the existence of the event to be so settled, that it is *as if* it had already been, inasmuch as in *effect* it already exists; it has already had actual *influence* and *efficiency*, viz. to produce the effect of infallible *prescience*. And as the effect supposes the cause, it is *as if* the event had already an existence.” † Thus, then, if “God knows events *because they are certain*,” as Dr. Fisk affirms, then he knows all the future volitions and free acts of men, “*because they are certain*;” of course, God’s infallible foreknowledge proves or rather *assumes* that those volitions are infallibly certain to take place. But here Dr. F. comes in direct conflict with Watson, who says: “We must not transfer the certainty from God to the action itself \* \* \* “in any sense.” ‡

Much of the obscurity and perplexity which Arminians find in this subject, is owing to their peculiar notions of the true nature of liberty. They say freedom implies a *self-determining power*, by which the mind in the exercise of choice, or the faculty of willing, *determines* its own acts; and this exercise of *self-determination* is essential to the freedom of the act. But this *self-determining* exercise of will, is itself an act of will; and in order to be free it must also flow from a previous exercise of *self-determination*, and that from a previous self-determination, and so on *ad infinitum*. So that if we ascend to the *first* free act, there must still be

\* Discourse on Predest. p. 6. Tract No. 131.

† Edwards on the Will, part 2, sec. 12.

‡ Theol. Inst. vol. ii. p. 430.

a *self-determination*, or free act of the will, to make that *first* act a free act; which involves the contradiction of an act of the will *before the first act*.

So also, their strange notion that liberty of the will implies *indifference*, or entire freedom from antecedent *bias*. Of course, the idea of the mind acting from *its views* of the strongest *reasons* of choice, its perceptions of the greatest good, and being directed by such *motives* as these in its choice, is with them absurd; for they hold that any *bias* of this sort destroys freedom! The mind must be able by some act or exertion of its inherent power, to put itself in a state of *indifference*; and then in that state it can perform free acts, *i. e.* it can choose *against* its perception of the strongest reasons, or without any reasons, or any other bias. But this is surely very self-contradictory; for President Edwards has clearly demonstrated that as every free act must be performed in a state of freedom, the Arminian notion that freedom of the will implies *indifference*, leads to the gross absurdity that the soul chooses one thing rather than another, *at the very time* that it has no preference or choice; or that there may be choice, while there is no choice.

Edwards has also demonstrated that the idea of *contingence* as understood by Arminians to belong to the actions of men, excludes all connection between cause and effect (in reference to this matter), and supposes many events to take place without any ground or reason of their occurring rather than their not occurring. And that to suppose the Divine Being to have infallible foreknowledge of the volitions of men, while there is *no ground or reason* of their existence rather than their non-existence, is to suppose him to know without evidence, or to know a thing *certainly* which is *uncertain*; or to know the *certainty* of an event, while at the same time he knows its *uncertainty*! Truly, it is not wonderful that Wesley “*could not tell*” how to reconcile foreknowledge with this strange mass of contradictions.

Again : “If an event be certainly foreknown, it must have a certain future existence, of which certain existence there must be some reason or ground. For as every free agent has the liberty of acting or not, or of performing a different action from the one which he eventually performs, if there existed no reason why the one took place and not the other, *all knowledge* of the action before it occurs is necessarily excluded. It would be to suppose knowledge without the least foundation for that knowledge in the object. God cannot know that something exists where there is nothing. God cannot see that an effect, yet future, will certainly be produced, if he does not know any cause of its existence.” (Bib. Repertory, vol. iii. 1831.) If it be alleged that there is no other ground or reason of the future existence of the event necessary to be supposed, in order to infallible foreknowledge, than the free agency of the creature, it is the same as to say that it is infallibly known that a creature will choose or prefer one course of action before another, *because* he is at liberty to choose either ; or, in other words, that he will certainly, in a given case, choose to act in a particular manner, *because* he is at perfect liberty to choose to act in the directly opposite manner, which is absurd. If there be such a thing as Arminian liberty, it is obvious, therefore, that there can be no such attribute of the Divine mind, as infallible and universal foreknowledge. If, on the other hand, we admit with the Scriptures the doctrine of Foreknowledge, it destroys for ever the baseless fabric of Arminian freedom.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the doctrine of Foreknowledge should be in no very good odor with our Methodist brethren. This is inferrible, among other reasons, from the fact, that their Articles and Book of Discipline are entirely silent upon the subject ; nor is it any where noticed in a volume of 240 pages, professing to be an exhibition of the faith of Christians. It is said, indeed, that the book mentions the Divine wisdom, which includes forekno-

but if men who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” make a distinction between these perfections of God, and give to each its separate place and prominence in *their* system, it would be both safe and modest not to attempt to improve upon their divinity.

Another most conclusive proof that Arminians are sorely perplexed with such subjects as Foreknowledge, freedom the will, &c. is found in their misstatements of the views of Calvinists. For example, Watson, one of their best informed writers, expounds the views of President Edwards as follows: “The notion inculcated is, that motives influence the will, just as an additional weight thrown into an even scale poises it and inclines the beam. This,” he adds, “is the favorite metaphor of the necessitarians, \* \* \* representing the will to be as *passive as the balance*; or in other words, \* \* annihilating the distinction between mind and matter.”\* And in destroying this baseless fabric of his own raising, he speaks of “the mind being *obliged* to determine by the strongest motive, *as the beam is to incline by the heaviest weight.*” But this is a gross caricature of Edwards’ views. “All allow,” says Edwards, “that natural (or physical) *impossibility wholly excuses.* \* \* \* As natural impossibility wholly excuses and excludes all blame, so the nearer the difficulty approaches to *impossibility*, the nearer the person is to blamelessness.”† These and similar statements stand on the page next to that where he uses the illustration of the scale or balance. He supposes it to be “intelligent,” and employs it merely to explain by the metaphor of weights cast into the scale, how a greater or less *degree* of physical difficulty implies a greater or less degree of *blamelessness!* Thus, the doctrine of Edwards is plainly this: that if there were any such physical necessity or force exerted upon the will, as the weight upon the balance, man *would be wholly*

\* Inst. vol. ii. p. 440.

† On the Will, part 3, sec. 3.

*without blame!* Yet Watson has the hardihood to charge him with the monstrous notion that the will is governed by motives, just as the material scale is *moved by weights!* Was there ever a more gross and palpable misstatement?

Following such a brilliant example, Messrs. Simpson and Foster use a similar illustration: “The water must run through the water-course; the wheel must turn under the force of the current. \* \* \* The movements of the mind are as absolutely fixed and rigidly necessary as the movements of the material creation, \* \* \* when Omnipotence urges it forward!”\* This, Arminians say, is the Calvinistic and Edwardean doctrine of the influence of motives upon the will! Yet, as we have just shown, and as any person of common sense may read for himself, President Edwards argues at length to prove that such a doctrine *entirely excuses* the sinner from blame!† And even Dr. Fisk takes up the same tale: “Dr. Edwards,” he tells us, “compares our volitions to the vibrations of a scale beam. \* \* \* What is this but teaching that motions of mind are governed by the same fixed laws as those of matter, and that volitions are perfectly mechanical states of mind.”‡ Thus they charge upon Edwards the very doctrine which he *laboriously refutes*; and then boast over it, as though they had achieved a great victory!

But what are these wonderful and almost omnipotent things called *motives*, which, we are told, *work* the mind or will, as the Almighty Power *moves* the material creation? Watson says they are “*reasons of choice, views and conceptions* of things in the mind, \* \* \* in consideration of which *the mind itself* wills and determines.”§ But if this definition be correct—and it is sufficiently so for all practical purposes—how is it possible the mind or will should be “worked

\* Objections, &c. pp. 237, 238.

† See the part and section before quoted.

‡ Fisk, quoted by Foster, p. 242.

§ Institutes, vol. ii. p. 440.

as a machine" by its own "reasons of choice, its views and conceptions of things?" For example, an impenitent person chooses a present wordly *good* in preference to future eternal happiness, which is distant and not so certainly in his power. His "views and conceptions" of the present good are such that, like the wine cup of the intemperate, they present to his mind stronger "*reasons of choice*" than the distant future presents. Of course he chooses the present good, and refuses the future happiness. But is there any thing in this mental operation bearing the most distant resemblance to the "vibratory movement of a balance" under the motive power of a weight? or any thing like the power of Omnipotence urging the will to act? How strange the misrepresentation! Arminians must be hard pressed in argument before they descend to such subterfuges.

A similar series of misstatements is attached to the doctrine of "necessity," as held and taught by Calvinists, in its relations to Divine Foreknowledge. Thus we are told—"The connection between the volition and the strongest motive is as absolute and *necessary* as the connection between *any* cause (even the will of God,) and its effect." And we have large discourse about "the mind whose determinations are *absolutely fixed* by the force of motives"—"required to overcome Omnipotence itself," which is the cause of the *necessity*—"a doctrine of *necessity*, which requires man to do what is absolutely *impossible*—what God himself cannot do, for He cannot work *impossibilities*." \* And even Bishop Simpson, in his introduction to Foster's work, speaks of the "doctrine of necessity" as opposed to "the freedom of the human will, &c."

But what says President Edwards in defining the term *necessity*? As used by himself and other Calvinists in these discussions, he expressly says he means "nothing different from *certainty*." And he adds: "I speak not now of the

\* Foster's Objections, chap. 8, and in numerous other places.

*certainty* of knowledge, but the certainty that is in things themselves, which is the foundation of the certainty of knowledge; or that (*certainty*) wherein lies the ground of the infallible truth of the proposition which affirms them.” \* But according to this definition, every prophecy of the Scriptures produces, or at least proves the infallible *necessity* (*i. e.* *certainty*,) of the event predicted? Such were the incarnation, sufferings and death of Christ, &c. All these events were infallibly *necessary*, or *certain* to take place, as Edwards and other Calvinists understand the term. Arminians themselves dare not question the truth of these statements.

But how do such authors as Watson, Fisk, Simpson and Foster dispose of such facts as these? Here, for example, is a formal *definition* given by Edwards at the opening of his immortal work on the Will, and observed cautiously throughout, whenever he has occasion to speak of *necessity*. How do these Arminians escape from such a predicament and manage to patch up their argument? Why, they say Edwards and other Calvinists must mean by *necessity* “a power not different from the law of gravitation or magnetic attraction”—“from the (*Calvinistic*) theory, inertia becomes the law of mind as of matter.” “Fate runs through all.” Such, they say, “is the supreme controlling power of Dr. Edwards and his followers.” † So that when Edwards demonstrates that the sufferings and death of Christ, and other great events predicted in the Scriptures, were *necessary*, or *certain* to take place, these Arminians say he meant they were predicted to take place under *some such* influence as the law of gravitation, some physical force or compulsion, which the Jews, who, “with wicked hands, crucified and slew the Lord of glory,” could no more resist than they could resist the laws of the planetary worlds! Did human weakness ever concoct

\* On the Will, part 1, sec. 3.

† Objections to Calvinism, p. 240, *et alibi*.

a more humiliating tissue of strange blunders ! And to crown the whole, these Arminians have published, and thus sanctioned, Dr. Fisk's statements—"whatever God foreknows will undoubtedly (or certainly) come to pass." "It is not at all difficult to conceive how the *certainty* of an event can beget knowledge" (or foreknowledge). "God knows an event to be certain *because it is certain.*"\* Thus they have unwittingly incorporated in their creed the very "*doctrine of necessity*" (or certainty) which is so carefully defined by Edwards. Edwards himself does not state more clearly than Dr. Fisk the infallible future certainty (or necessity) of all foreknown events, including all the acts of the human will !

To render these Arminian misstatements the more wonderful, Edwards not only defines with great care the Calvinistic use of the term *necessity*, in discussions about the will, but he largely explains the distinction between natural (or physical) necessity and moral necessity. So far from representing the will to be "passive as the material *balance*," "*obliged* to determine by the *heaviest weights*," &c. as Watson and others allege, he minutely defines what Calvinists mean by *moral* causes, such as "the strength of inclination, habits and dispositions of the heart, moral motives and inducements"—and he particularly distinguishes this sort of *certainty* of effect and result, from "the *natural necessity* by which men's bodies move downward when not supported."† Yet these Arminian writers charge him with holding a necessity "not different from that arising from the law of gravitation"—the very thing which he cautiously and expressly disclaims !

To make his meaning most evident, Edwards uses such illustrations as these : "A child of great love and duty to his parents, may have a *moral inability* to kill his father; or a woman of virtue to prostitute herself to her slave." In

\* Meth. Tract, No. 131, pp. 7, 8.

† On the Will, part 1, sec. 4.

these cases they act under what he means by “a moral necessity,” *i. e.* a certainty of such results under such circumstances—a certainty of such effects from such causes. “It cannot be truly said, according to the *ordinary use of language*,” adds Edwards, “that a malicious man, let him be never so malicious, *cannot* hold his hand from striking; or that a drunkard, let his appetite be never so strong, *cannot* keep the cup from his mouth.” These examples are of external acts—but he adds, “it is more evidently false that such person *is unable* to exert the *acts of the will*, \* \* for the very willing is the doing. \* \* In these mental acts, to ascribe the non-performance to the want of power or ability is not just, \* \* for he has the faculties of mind and a capacity of nature, and every thing else sufficient but a disposition—nothing is wanting but a will,” or a willingness in order to the mental act. Is this the same as to say that man lies under *a necessity* like that which “sways the beam when moved by the heaviest weight?” If a man *hates* his neighbor so bitterly that he *cannot love* him, is he therefore a mere machine—is he *excusable*, just as if he were *impelled* by the hand of Omnipotence—*excusable*, just as really as the sinking of the balance under the weight? This is Arminian doctrine, *but not that of Calvinists*.

Edwards still more fully explains his meaning when he comes to speak of Foreknowledge. One of his sections bears the title: “Foreknowledge infers necessity.” “I allow,” he says, “that mere knowledge does not affect the thing known to make it more certain; but I say, it *supposes* and *proves* the thing to be already both future and certain.” Again: “There must be a certainty in things themselves, before they are certainly known; or, which is the same thing, known to be certain.” This is the kind of “necessity” which he advocates, viz. the *certainty* of events. How it ever entered the brain of Arminians to charge him and other Calvinists with teaching a “necessity” such as *moves the*

*planets in their orbits,* is a mystery which we leave others fully to explain. What will not men sometimes do, when hard pressed in argument !

But the embarrassments felt by Arminians when they are pressed with the doctrine of Divine Foreknowledge, are abundantly evident in the curious figment adopted by Dr. Adam Clarke, the commentator. In his headlong zeal to exterminate the doctrine of Predestination, he was forced into the denial of a Divine attribute every where taught in the Scriptures. Adopting the idea of Chevalier Ramsey, Dr. Clarke recommends to his brethren a new and easy theory of foreknowledge. According to his view, God makes a distinction in the universe of *knowable* things, between those which he will foreknow, and those of which he will choose to remain ignorant. Among the latter, Dr. Clarke places the free actions of intelligent moral agents. God resolves *not to foreknow these*. Thus it seems, that *ignorance* is a high perfection of an infinite Being, without which it is impossible, according to the Dr. to govern the moral universe ! Dr. C. felt that the commonly received views of foreknowledge are inconsistent with the denial of the doctrine of predestination, and that most of the objections made to the latter, lie with equal weight against the former. Hence the necessity of devising some mode of escaping the difficulties, which press upon the admission of foreknowledge with the rejection of predestination.

Mr. Watson and his brethren had too much shrewdness to adopt this weak expedient. They saw at once, that it does not meet the real difficulty of the case, viz. "to reconcile the Divine prescience and the free actions of men." \* "For," argues Watson, "some contingent actions for which men have been made accountable, *we are sure* have been foretold by the Holy Spirit speaking in the prophets; and if the freedom of man can be reconciled with the prescience of God in these cases, why not in all?" Most forcibly and logically

said. Even if we were to conclude with Dr. Clarke, that it is consistent with the perfections of God to shut his eyes that he may not see the free actions of men, and thus impose upon himself voluntary ignorance, this strange supposition would bring no aid to Arminianism in the midst of her trials and perplexities.

A simple statement of undeniable truth will place this subject in its proper light. The moral actions of men are foreknown of God hundreds of years before they take place. This no one can doubt who believes the Scriptures. The conduct of men, whether good or evil, is *infallibly* foreknown therefore, unless the knowledge of God be mere conjecture. It is just as certain, therefore, that it will agree with the Divine foreknowledge, and be precisely what it is known to be, as it is certain God will not and cannot mistake. Here then is a certainty\* as infallible as any that grows out of predestination. If we reject one of these, on this account, we must, to be consistent, reject both. But to deny the Divine prescience is to deny God. Thus does Methodism, in her rash haste, direct her course upon the very brink of the dark abyss of atheism.

\* “If it be alleged that the purpose influences the action, and therefore there is a wide difference, we answer, that if the Divine purpose—*as we maintain*—has no other influence on the action than to *render it certain*, there is no difference at all, in this respect, between the theories of foreknowledge and decree; for on some account and for some reason, the thing *is as certain* as it can be on the theory of mere foreknowledge.” — *Biblical Repertory*, vol. iii. No. 2.

## LETTER VI.

## FOREKNOWLEDGE—PREDESTINATION.

REV. SIR—The subject of the second *chapter\** of the “Objections to Calvinism” is “Eternal Decrees.” It would be a very wrong inference from this, that Arminians reject the doctrine of “eternal decrees.” Even Bishop Simpson believes that God will judge the world, and say to the righteous on his right hand: “Come, ye blessed;” and to the wicked at the left, “Depart, ye cursed.” If so, when did the omniscient God first form the *design or purpose* thus to judge the world? Was it in time, or from eternity? Obviously the latter, as even the Bishop will concede. “For,” says Watson, “what the creature will do (in order to judgment) is known beforehand with a perfect prescience; and what God has *determined* (or decreed) to do in consequence, is made apparent by what he actually does, which is with him no new, no sudden thought, but known and PURPOSED FROM ETERNITY in view of the actual circumstances.”† Then here is an “eternal decree” to judge the world, to acquit and save one part, a *number* of persons infallibly known to God, and to condemn the rest.

But what is still more surprising, Arminians also teach “eternal decrees” of “election and reprobation!” Here is the proof: “Obedient, persevering believers,” says Fletcher, “are God’s *elect* in the particular and full sense of the word, being *elected to the reward of eternal life in glory.*” But may not some of these elect ones perish? Fletcher answers: “We grant that *none* of these peculiar *elect* shall ever perish,

\* On the title-page, Mr. Foster says his book is “a series of *Letters* to Rev. N. L. Rice, D. D.” But there is no such thing as a *letter* in the volume. There are eight *chapters* and an appendix, but no “letters.”

† Inst. part 2, chap. 28.

though they would have perished, if they had not been faithful unto death." Very well; that is sound Calvinism—the means necessary to the end. But is the number of these elect so *certain* that it cannot be increased or diminished? "We allow," answers Fletcher, "that with *respect to God's foreknowledge and omniscience THEIR NUMBER IS CERTAIN.*"\* But if "their number is certain in God's foreknowledge and omniscience," it cannot be *uncertain* in the eternal decree to judge the world, which the Bishop, following Watson, must hold and teach. Hence it follows, on the authority of Watson, Fletcher, Bishop Simpson and the General Conference, that "the number of the elect is certain," and, of course, will be *the same* at the judgment as it was known to be from eternity, unless God may be mistaken in his "foreknowledge!" Fletcher and Watson are certainly such good authority in these matters, that Bishop Simpson will not repudiate it.

But as Mr. Foster's "Objections" are confined almost exclusively to "the decree of reprobation," who would ever suspect the Bishop and his Arminian brethren of maintaining *this* "horrible decree?" Yet such is the simple fact, which we prove as follows: We turn to the 140th page of your volume of "Doctrinal Tracts," published by your General Conference. Attend to the following quotations:

"God *predestinates* or *fore-appoints* all disobedient unbelievers to *damnation*, not without, *but according to his foreknowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world.*" "God, from the foundation of the world, foreknew all men's believing or not believing. And according to this his foreknowledge (viz. from the foundation of the world, or from eternity), he refused or *reprobated* all disobedient unbelievers *as such*, to *damnation.*" On these extracts, I observe,

1. It is asserted that some men will live and die "disobedient unbelievers."

\* See his Works, vol. i. p. 399. "Preface to fictitious and genuine Creed."

2. God had a perfect “foreknowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world.”

3. It follows that he perfectly foreknew their character, names and *number*: these were certainly known, *i. e.* immutably certain, as God could not mistake a single name, or miscount a single unit of the precise *number* of the “disobedient unbelievers,” who are “fore-appointed to damnation !”

4. These “disobedient unbelievers,” thus infallibly known by works, character, names, *number*, God has “*predestinated* or *fore-appointed to damnation.*”

5. This “predestination to damnation” of the precise “number of disobedient unbelievers,” was from eternity, or “according to God’s foreknowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world.”

6. This “fore-appointment or refusal of the exact *number* of disobedient unbelievers;” this decree of *reprobation*, was passed “before they were born,” and, of course, “before they had done either good or evil.” Thus “some men are born devoted from the womb to eternal death.”

7. “This eternal decree” (of reprobation) we are told in the same volume, page 15, “God will not change and man cannot resist !” So that the Arminian decree of Reprobation is not only eternal, but *irresistible* and *unchangeable* !

8. These “disobedient unbelievers” are thus particularly and unchangeably designed, and their *number* is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished, unless God may be mistaken. Thus it is plain, that notwithstanding all their outcry against Foreordination, the Bishop and his brethren believe and teach the doctrine of “eternal decrees”—even the eternal, immutable, irresistible decrees of election and reprobation ; according to which “the *number* of the elect is *certain* as the foreknowledge of God ;” and, of course, as the *number* of those who are elect (*or chosen* from mankind) is certain, so the *number* of the reprobate (disobedient unbelievers) must necessarily be equally certain. The

one set cannot be more certain than the other. If, for example, the number to be taken from ten be *certainly five*, the number left will be equally certain to be *five*. This is plain to the humblest understanding.

Now here the question arises—why are these doctrines of eternal, absolute, *numerical election and reprobation*, never heard in Methodist pulpits? It is not for us to answer so difficult a question. We can only conjecture that they are afraid to preach thus, lest their people should suspect them of going over to Calvinism—which, according to Messrs. Foster and Simpson, represents “God as to be contemplated only with dread, detestation and abhorrence”—“a hideous compound of cruelty, caprice, duplicity and falsehood.” \*

What, then, is Predestination as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and believed by the Presbyterian church? It is the doctrine of a plan devised and executed by Him who is the God of infinite knowledge, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. Every *rational man*, when he designs to erect some complicated structure, either of matter or mind, pre-arranges carefully the whole plan. Just so with the Great Architect of the material and moral universe. In this plan man occupies the place of a free moral agent, to whom the Divine decree secures freedom of action in its highest sense. God has ordained that he shall be possessed of liberty, and it must be so.† But man, created free either to stand or fall,

\* Objections, &c. pp. 54, 122, &c. &c. &c. We hope to be pardoned for soiling our pages with these and similar extracts. Such is the prevailing style of the book, and if we quote at all, it is difficult to avoid such phraseology.

† “Could not God from all eternity decree that creatures endued with liberty should exist; and if this was his purpose, will not the event answer to it? Human liberty, therefore, instead of being destroyed by the decree, is established upon an immutable basis. It would be very strange, indeed, if the Almighty could not effectually will the existence of a free, voluntary act. To suppose the contrary, would be to deny his omnipotence. To say, then, that the decree by which the certainty of a free act is secured, violates free agency, seems very much like a contradiction.” *Biblical Repertory.*

abused his liberty by rebelling against God, and lost all that renders existence valuable—his moral purity, and his hope of immortality. To rescue him from this condition of hopeless misery, God has provided a Saviour, who is the “author and finisher of the faith” that saves the soul. Every thing that a merciful God performs for man’s redemption, he before determined (or decreed) to do. He becomes the “author and finisher of faith” and salvation to those who are delivered from hell. He before decreed or determined to become the “author and finisher” of their redemption. This is the doctrine of election to eternal life. But *when* did God *first intend* to perform these acts of mercy for fallen men? Was there ever a period when He *did not intend* to redeem them? Manifestly not. This eternal *design*, then, or *intention*, to deliver immortal souls from death, by becoming (through Christ) the “author and finisher of their faith,” holiness and salvation, is the eternal decree of predestination to a life of endless bliss.

On the other hand, if fallen man live and die impenitent, he fills up the measure of his iniquity, and in the strong language of our Confession, is “doomed to dishonor and wrath *for his sin*”—chap. 3, sec. 7. It is right in the God of justice to doom him. It was also right to ordain or determine to doom him to wrath “*for his sin*.” It cannot be wrong to ordain or determine to do a right thing. Every thing which is done by the righteous Rector of the universe, He before determined to do. He actually sentences the sinner to suffer *for his sin*. He before decreed, ordained, or determined to do so. And this is the villified and misrepresented doctrine of reprobation to eternal death.

But what is the doctrine of Foreknowledge upon the same subject? God creates man, and places him in a state where he infallibly foreknows he will be led by temptation to commit sin. Under these circumstances, man will sin as certainly and undoubtedly as it is certain the all-knowing God cannot mis-

take. Man is therefore created with an infallible certainty of sinning against God. His righteous retribution is also infallibly foreknown. Man will infallibly sin, and God will infallibly doom him to wrath for his sin. All this, in the case of every finally impenitent sinner, was as certainly foreknown before his creation, as it is an awful fact after his doom is sealed, or as it will be known at the final consummation.

The sin and its punishment would as certainly not be different from what they prove to be, as it is impossible God should become an erring, deceived being. How, then, are the difficulties diminished in the latter statement of the subject? In predestination, the existence of sin is permitted, as the abuse of man's free agency. In foreknowledge, it is foreseen, and not prevented. In the former, it has a place in the universe, as a mysterious evil, out of which God will bring ultimate good. In the latter, it is distinctly and infallibly foreknown, and will hold a place in the creation as certainly as God is unerring. In predestination, God decrees or determines to permit sin, and to punish the wicked *for their sin*. He determines to do the very thing which all acknowledge it is right he should do. In foreknowledge, He foresees infallibly the sin of the creature, and also his own act by which he will doom him to everlasting destruction; and yet, with this infallible certainty of man's sin and perdition, creates him with precisely those faculties and propensities, and places him in that state and under those circumstances, in connection with which his fall and ruin will as certainly be the consequence as God is certainly omniscient. We submit to the candid judgment of every reader, whether those who reject Predestination, while they receive the doctrine of Foreknowledge, do not "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." Nor need it be thought strange to hear even preachers of this stamp utter sentiments with regard to the latter, which wound the feelings and even chill the blood of sober Christians.

The doctrine of Predestination as thus stated, has received the cordial approval of many of the most distinguished theologians in the Presbyterian church. To any well informed Calvinist, the foul epithets heaped upon our system by Arminian authors and preachers, serve only to excite compassion for their rashness, or disgust for their impiety.\*

But still it may be inquired whether there is not a class of Calvinists whose sentiments, when fairly and honestly construed, assume much stronger ground than the foregoing; and perhaps give some show of occasion for the aspersions cast upon us by Arminians? We answer—we know of no such Calvinists in the Presbyterian church; and if there be any such in other connections, we are not responsible for their errors. We have admitted that the distinction of *Supralapsarian* and *Sublapsarian* has had an existence, and a few eminent men seem to have adopted the former view. This distinction relates to the *order* of the Divine decrees. The *Supralapsarian* goes “above the fall”—for so the term signifies. According to him, “God had but the one great end in view in creation—the manifestation of his perfections; and for this purpose, says an eloquent writer, he formed men with the design that they should sin, in order that He might appear infinitely good in pardoning some, and just in condemning others. He resolved to punish such and such persons, not because he foresaw they would sin, and in view of their sin, but he resolved that they should sin that he might damn them.” † But the eloquent Calvinist who draws this picture

\* For many rare specimens, see the book of Foster and Simpson—“Satanic cruelty,” “malevolence,” “hypocrisy,” “God a Moloch,” “worse than the devil,” &c. &c. We would not quote such blasphemy, were it not that it seems necessary in order to show the spirit in which Arminians controvert what they call Calvinism.

† This statement is from Saurin, vol. ii. Serm. 66. A much milder and probably more *just* view of the *Supralapsarian* theory is given by Ridgely, vol. i. p. 445. He says: “That system represents reprobation to be, not an act of justice, but rather of sovereignty”—and that “it has given rise to

of the *Supralapsarian* scheme, utterly repudiates it. “We easily conceive,” he says, “that it is for the glory of Divine justice to punish guilty men. But to resolve to damn them without the consideration of sin—to create them that they might sin, to determine that they should sin in order to their destruction, seems to us to tarnish the glory of God, rather than to display it.” “In the general scheme of our church,” he adds, “God only permits men to sin, and it is the abuse of liberty that plunges man into misery.” “We believe that God from a principle of goodness created mankind free, agreeably to his infinite wisdom,” &c. He then states and approves the doctrine of the *Sublapsarian*, very much as we have given it.

In earlier periods, we admit there were some eminent men, such as Twiss, Witsius and others, who appear to have adopted the *Supralapsarian* scheme; and even Calvin, at times, seems to lean in that direction. But, so far as known to us, the ministry of the Presbyterian church are *to a man, Sublapsarian*. In their scheme the purposes or decrees contemplate mankind as fallen and lost, “by nature children of wrath;” and that from this mass of ruins, God determined to save all who will be saved, and to punish the rest “for their sin.” The wonderful provision of mercy in Jesus Christ, by which he saves men, never was made for fallen angels. “He took not on him the nature of angels—but was found in fashion as a man.”

Thus, then, it appears that some of the same objections urged by Arminians against the system of Calvinism, in general, have been employed by the *Sublapsarian* Calvinist in refuting the scheme of the *Supralapsarian*. But as all Presbyterian authors, whenever they speak of the distinction, agree in disclaiming the *Supralapsarian* theory as seeming to “make God the author of sin,” &c. it is *worse than folly* prejudices against the true doctrine of Predestination, as though it involved the idea that God made man to damn him.”

to hold the Presbyterian church responsible for such errors. How gross a perversion of the truth do we find, for example, in Dr. Fisk's "Discourse on Predestination and Election!" He represents the Calvinistic system thus: "That the character and acts of intelligent beings, so far as their moral accountability is concerned, are definitely fixed and *efficiently produced* by the unalterable purpose and *effectual decree of God*." "Here," he adds, "we are at issue with Calvinists!" Not *at issue* with any shade of extreme Calvinism; for he says, with such statements "**AGREE ALL THE CALVINISTIC DIVINES** in Europe and America!" These extraordinary statements are published by the General Conference, in No. 131 of their series of Tracts! These are not the blunders of a few misinformed zealots, but the deliberate, well-considered statements of the president of a college, and others of their most enlightened men! And even Bishop Simpson, in his "Introduction," as we have already shown, is found in the same discreditable position.

When, therefore, Messrs. Foster and Simpson object to some of our views, "that they render the conclusion inevitable that God is the author—the *originator or cause of sin*"\*—we meet the impious charge in the language of President Edwards—"If, by 'the author of sin,' be meant the *agent* or *actor* of sin, or the *doer* of a wicked thing, \* \* \* I reject such an imputation on the Most High as a reproach and blasphemy infinitely to be abhorred. But if, by 'the author of sin,' be meant the *permitter*, or not a *hinderer* of sin; and at the same time a disposer of the state of events, in such a manner, for wise and holy and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin, if it be *permitted and not hindered*, will most certainly follow: I say, if this be all that is meant, I do not deny that God is the author of sin (though I dislike and reject the phrase), and it is no reproach for the Most High to be thus the author of sin. \* \* \* And I assert that

\* Objections, &c. p. 30.

it equally follows from the doctrine maintained by most of the Arminian divines." \*

On the subject of *the permission* of sin, the author of "Objections," &c. seems even more in the dark than is his wont. Thus he tells us, "The doctrine of permission is an abandonment of the doctrine of decrees as taught by the Presbyterian church—that it is Arminianism, not Calvinism;" and addressing Dr. Rice, Mr. Foster says: "Do you not know that I defend the doctrine of *permission* (of sin) against *you who deny it?*" But if the Bishop and Mr. F. had been at the pains to look into almost any of our standard writers, from Turretine down to the present day, they would have discovered this distinction fairly and fully stated between the *efficacious* and *permissive* decrees. Thus, in so common a book as Dr. Ashbel Green's "Lectures on the Shorter Catechism," we read as follows :

"There is a difference always to be kept up between what have been denominated *the efficacious* decrees and the *permissive* decrees. The former relate to whatever is morally *good*—his *permissive decrees* to whatever is *morally evil*. Evil he *permits* to take place and efficaciously overrules to his own glory." So also Dr. John Owen, of the days of Cromwell : "The decree respects the creation of man, and *the permission* of his fall." † It would be a serious task to quote even a part of what our best writers have penned in defense of this distinction. The language of our Confession of Faith will be presented as we proceed in the discussion. We will thus be able to decide whether Calvinists DENY what they every where recognize as an essential feature of their system !

In reply to the usual quotations from modern Calvinists abundantly asserting the distinction between *efficacious* and *permissive decrees*, the General Conference, in Tract 131, employ Dr. Fisk to utter the following :

\* On the Will, part 4, sec. 9.

† Exposition of Hebrews, vol. ii. p. 35.

"Those *early* defenders of unconditional election," remarks Dr. F. "came out boldly and fearlessly with their doctrine. If *modern* Calvinists would do the same, we should need no other refutation of the system." "*At the present day*, numerous changes of a more popular cast, and such as are suited to *cover up* the offensive features of the system, are introduced." "To represent the thing as it is, seems so like accusing our brethren of *insincerity* and *duplicity*," &c. "And being hard pressed by their antagonists, they have thrown up these new redoubts, and assumed these new positions, *not only to conceal* their doctrine, but if possible to defend it."

It is not unworthy of remark, that the Papists, Pelagians and Socinians of Turretine's day employed this same artifice. Thus they accused the orthodox—"re ipsa sentire, quod verbo profiteri non audent"—"*with holding sentiments they did not dare openly to profess.*" And Turretine tells us, to such men as Zuingle, Luther, Calvin, Beza, and others, the atrocious injury was done (*atrocem fieri injuriam*).

If, therefore, Dr. Fisk and the Conference are correct, the doctrine of the *permission of sin* is a mere subterfuge—a *modern* Calvinistic *artifice*, adopted in order to *conceal* our real views from our Arminian antagonists, by whom we have been "*hardly pressed*" in the argument!

But in this thing these Arminian authors and their Conference betray great rashness, as well as commit a breach of Christian courtesy. It will be admitted, we suppose, that Francis Turretine does not belong to the "*moderns*." He was born 1623—died 1687. His great work, the *Institutio Theologicae*, was published at Geneva, where he was Professor of Theology, one of Calvin's distinguished successors. Of course, he belongs to a period a century prior to the advent of Wesley, a hundred years before Methodism was thought of. He was one of the brightest ornaments of that celebrated school of the prophets. His system is now a standard work among Calvinists, is used at Princeton, N. J. as a text-book,

and is every where recognized as a reliable exposition of Old School Calvinism. We will translate a few passages for the benefit of our assailants :

*Decrees.*—“The decree, in respect of its objects, often includes a certain condition, but is nevertheless in its own nature absolute ; because both the condition and conditional event depend immutably upon God, either in respect of *permission* in things that are wicked, or of *efficiency* in things that are good : (vel quoad permissionem ut in malis, vel quoad effectiōnem in bonis.)”

*Necessity.*—Our author affirms that the Divine decree implies the necessity of future events ; but he expressly disclaims the idea of an *absolute* or *physical necessity*, as also the necessity of *coercion* or *force* ; and teaches a necessity which respects only the *certainty of the future existence* of the event, which is the object of the decree : (respectu certitudinis eventus et futuritionis ex decreto.) And in reply to the objection that this doctrine makes God the author of sin, he says of the decree, “non est effectivum mali, sed tantum permissivum et directivum”—“it is not *efficient* of evil, but only *permissive* and *directive* to proper ends.”

*Election*. he defines, “the counsel of God, in which he decreed out of his mere grace to have compassion upon certain persons, and being delivered from their sins through his Son, to bestow upon them eternal salvation.” “The decree of eternal life and eternal death has respect to man as fallen (respicere hominem lapsū). Otherwise he says, we represent “God as having reprobated man before *by sin* he could be the proper object of reprobation ; and as having sentenced the innocent to punishment, *before any fault was foreseen in them.*” “By the decree of God, the salvation of the elect is established and certain, but by the decree of the same God only in the way of faith and holiness.”

The views of Turretine on the subject of *Reprobation*, will be further adduced when we come to speak more directly on

that topic. We will next look at the sentiments of the Westminster Assembly, which met in 1643, and whom even Dr. Fisk and the Conference will hardly claim to be "moderns!" In order to convict Presbyterians of the monstrous impiety which represents God as the author and efficient cause of sin, these Arminians quote the Assembly's Confession, chap. 5, sec. 4 :

"The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom and infinite goodness of God, do so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a manifold dispensation to his own holy ends." This passage is supposed to assert such an "*efficient control*" over all the actions of men and angels, as to represent God as the author of all their sins. Now it might be a sufficient reply to this simply to quote the remainder of the section, viz. "*Yet so as the sinfulness thereof (of wicked actions) proceedeth only from the creature, not from God.*" The very section, adduced in proof that Presbyterians teach that God is the author of sin, utterly disclaims such a sentiment. Is it *fair*, to attempt to prove us guilty of an impious dogma, by referring to an article which *expressly disclaims it?* Further: Let us insert in the body of the foregoing article, the negative which denies its truth, and how will it read? Thus: "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, *do not* so far manifest themselves in his providence, as to extend either to the first fall, or to any other of the sins of angels and men, *except* by a bare permission, which has *not* joined with it any wise and powerful bounding (*i. e.* limiting or restraining); nor does God order (or overrule) and govern them, in a manifold dispensation, to *any* holy end." In the act of sin, therefore, creatures are left beyond the reach of Divine providence; they are without any *overruling* power, and beyond the *limit*

of any *wise* and *powerful* restraint, for holy and benevolent purposes! Moreover, where there is no government, there is no law, and where there is no law, there is no transgression. In the act of sin, therefore, it is impossible to sin!! In truth, this article is only a full expression of the sentiment of the Psalmist: “The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain.” Do Methodists deny this?

Once more our Confession is brought to testify against us. Thus chap. 3, sec. 2: “Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass, yet has he not decreed any thing because he foresaw it as future,” &c. But can any person of sense maintain the affirmative of this article, viz. “that God *has* decreed many things because he foresaw them as future?” How will it work with his positive or efficient decrees—say to make or judge the world? Has God decreed (or determined) to do either of these great acts, *because he foresaw he would perform them?* The question answers itself. Let us try it with his permissive decrees. Does God *foresee* that he will *permit* certain conduct, and *not till then*, decree (or determine) to permit it? A child would pronounce it nonsense to talk of a being *foreseeing* that he will do certain things, and *then, not before*, determining to do them.

Again it is objected that our Confession of Faith teaches that the angels and men who are predestinated, “are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” Conf. chap. 3, sec. 4. But what is the language of Methodism in her standard publications, in reference to this subject? “I believe the eternal decree concerning both (election and reprobation) is expressed in these words, ‘He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.’ And this decree, without doubt, God will not change, and man cannot resist.” Doct. Tracts, p. 15. Now add to this “eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree”

of Methodism, the admitted truth, that God *infallibly foreknows*, individually, personally, *by name* and *by number*, the identical persons to whom it will secure salvation, and to whom it will secure perdition—that the *number* of the saved and the *number* of the lost, are as *certainly* known in the Divine prescience, as though that precise number of persons had already been admitted to heaven, and that other precise number been cast down to hell. Most manifestly, then, “the number of the predestinated is so definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished,” UNLESS the Divine foreknowledge be mere conjecture, and he who knows all things have made a mistake. “Whatever God foreknows,” says Dr. Fisk, “will undoubtedly (or certainly) come to pass.” He foreknows the *exact number* who will believe and be saved—that exact number will *undoubtedly* be saved. He foreknows the *exact number* who will refuse to believe and perish—that exact number will *undoubtedly* (or certainly) perish. This argument might be extended to a great length, at every step multiplying the embarrassments of our opponents. We might call upon them to explain how they can *sincerely* and *honestly* urge, exhort, entreat sinners to flee from the wrath to come, since, on their own principles, “the *number* of the elect is certain,” as Fletcher affirms, and, of course, the number of the reprobate equally *certain*. Do they expect to change this certainty, *i. e.* to *falsify* infallible foreknowledge? How will they, on these principles, evince the *mercy* of God, in originally *creating* beings who were infallibly certain to be miserable for ever; or *his grace*, in giving his well-beloved Son to die, to make an atonement and purchase a salvation, by shedding his blood *for* thousands, for whom these blessings were *infallibly certain* to result only in the aggravation of their unutterable woe?

Our Arminian “antagonists,” as they choose to call themselves, will now perceive how vulnerable the scheme of doctrine they have adopted—how easy to retort upon such

authors as Foster and Simpson, the shocking blasphemies they charge upon Calvinism; and especially how foolish, not to say *wicked*, the attempt to fix upon the Presbyterian ministry the foul stain of deliberate deception, “insincerity,” “duplicity,” “disingenuousness and cowardice, in smoothing over and covering up, &c.”\* It is obvious that these foul aspersions lie with far greater force against our Arminian accusers; for who ever heard an Arminian preacher state from the pulpit these difficulties of his system? Who ever finds them even *hinted at* in such works as Foster’s “Objections to Calvinism?” But “to their own Master they stand or fall”—we are not their judges.

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## LETTER VII.

### PREDESTINATION—ELECTION—REPROBATION.

REV. SIR—It has now been made apparent, if I mistake not, that the attempts of Arminians to manufacture a creed for the Presbyterian church, is a total failure; and that the impious dogmas which you say we “must believe,” bear “the image and superscription” of the great lights of Arminianism! We might here leave the subject to the judgment of all unprejudiced men. But although it is not our object to write an extended defense of the doctrine of Predestination; yet, as this feature of our system more than all others, has furnished modern Methodists with matter of abuse and denunciation, it may be proper to dwell briefly on its logical bearings upon several distinct topics; in doing which we shall endeavor at the same time to exhibit the weakness of the Arminian scheme.

I. The inquiry, Why does sin exist under the government of a most wise, holy and powerful Ruler? has always been

\* Dr. Fisk on Elec. and Predest. pp. 34, 35. Methodist Tract, No. 131.

viewed as attended with difficulty. If we accept the statements of Messrs. Foster and Simpson, the Calvinistic solution is briefly this : "God is the author, originator and efficient cause of all sin," and, of course, of the *first* sin. "Divine agency is as much concerned in *bad* as in good actions." "When man chooses sin, he wills not freely—but God by invisible power, *irresistibly compels* him to will"—"and he is no more free in his choice than the earth in its revolutions." Of course, the whole matter is contained in a nut-shell: Adam, according to Calvinists, sinned because he could not help it—could not *resist the Divine impulse* to do wickedly !\*

But if these our "antagonists" had been sincerely desirous "to show what Calvinists themselves teach on this subject," they would have pursued a very different course. Instead of gathering scraps, detached paragraphs penned by Chalmers, Dick, Toplady, Edwards and others, often when writing on other topics, they would have copied a few sentences such as the following from Jonathan Edwards, when expressly speaking of the author of sin : "There is a vast difference between God being concerned by his *permission*, in the event and act of sin, \* \* \* and his *producing* it by a positive *agency* or *efficiency*. As there is a vast difference between the sun being the cause of the light, and of the warmth of the atmosphere \* \* and its being the occasion of *darkness* and *frost* when it descends below the horizon. \* \* \* Sin is not the fruit of any *positive agency* or influence of the Most

\* Objections, &c. pp. 45, 47. In proof of these blasphemous charges, Mr. F. quotes Dr. Emmons; but he forgets to add that he was not a Presbyterian but a Congregationalist of New England—that his doctrinal sentiments never had any considerable currency even among his own brethren, and never found a *solitary advocate* in the Presbyterian church. Any minister of our body who should avow Emmonism, would be *disciplined* for dangerous error. Mr. Foster might as well have cited Priestley, Belsham or Ballou against Calvinism as Dr. Emmons. In Ridgely's Body of Divinity, vol. i. p. 424, he will find an able and conclusive refutation of Dr. Emmons' views, viz. that "God is the direct author, the immediate cause, the proper creator of all moral evil, as well as of holiness in heart and life."

High, but arises from the withholding of his action and energy, &c.; there is a great difference between his *not hindering* it and his being the proper cause of sin, &c. If men never commit sin, except when God leaves them to themselves, and necessarily (or certainly) sin when he does so, it follows that their sin is *from themselves*, not from God.” \* Or, as it is expressed in our Catechism: “Our first parents, being left to *the freedom of their own will*, fell \* \* \* by sinning against God.” † Is this the same as to say: “man is a machine, and under a necessity such as that of matter to obey gravitation?” ‡

In reply, therefore, to the question, Why does sin exist under the government of a most wise, holy, benevolent and powerful Being? Calvinists from the days of the Apostle Paul and Augustine down to Luther, Calvin and the Westminster Assembly, have uniformly answered, “Because God saw proper to permit its existence, determining so to overrule all things as to make ‘the wrath of man to praise him,’ and from infinite evil to bring infinite good.” Thus the Westminster Confession: “This their sin (viz. of our first parents) God was pleased according to his wise and holy counsel, *to permit*, having purposed to order it to his own glory.” chap. 6, sec. 1. Again: Larger Catechism, Q. 19: “God by his providence *permitted* some of the angels willfully and irrecoverably to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that and all their sins to his own glory.” While, therefore, the Westminster Divines maintain that “God hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass,” they also admit the important distinction between the *efficient* and the *permissive* decrees, so that “all things fall out according to the nature of second causes.” chap. 5, sec. 2. “Neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken

\* On the Will, pp. 250, 251, abridged.

† Quest. 13.

‡ Foster’s Objections, p. 44.

away, but rather established." chap. 3, sec. 1. This powerful, wise and good providence, it is further said (chap. 5, sec. 4), "extendeth itself even to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men, and that *not by a bare permission*, but such (permission) as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." "Not by a *bare permission*;" "not," to employ the illustration of Calvin, "as though God were seated in a watch-tower, awaiting fortuitous events." The views of the Westminster Confession are in part well expressed by Wesley: "It was easy for the Almighty to have prevented sin." "It was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it; for he hath all power both in heaven and in earth. But it was known to him at the same time, that it was best on the whole not to prevent it." Serm. vol. ii. p. 235. That sin, therefore, which he saw "*on the whole to be best*," he determined, decreed, or foreordained—not "*to influence men to commit*"—not "*to work in the hearts of the wicked*"—(as we are slanderously reported)—but TO PERMIT\* and to order or overrule for his own glory.

The Calvinistic answer to the inquiry, Why does sin exist? may therefore be summed up as follows:

1. Sin exists by the *permission* of the Almighty Ruler.
2. It exists according to his *intention*. If he suffer or permit sin to exist, he doubtless *intended* to do so. Otherwise, he permitted it *without* intention; that is, without design, plan or wisdom; or *contrary* to his intention. In other

\* It is singular that a Doctor of Divinity should so far misunderstand the theological meaning of this term, as to talk as follows: "If they mean by *permission*, that God gave a personal permit to Adam and Eve to commit sin," &c. "To say that God gave a *permit* or *license* to sin, is bold; but to say that he *decreed* it," &c.—Dr. Bangs' *Reply to Haskel*, p. 22.

words, *contrary* to what is holy, wise and good, as all his designs must be.

3. The permitted existence of sin, as a part of the Divine plan, was infallibly certain and fixed before the creation of angels or men; or in other words, from eternity. For if it be according to the intention of the Divine Being to *suffer* the existence of sin, it was always so, unless God has changed. Further: God from all eternity foreknew that he would suffer sin to exist. But if from eternity he *certainly* knew that he would permit sin, he must have *certainly* determined or purposed to permit it. Otherwise he could not *certainly know* that he would do that which he had not certainly determined to do. Besides, if the purpose to permit sin be not from eternity, then must it have been formed at some subsequent period. Then there must have been some reasons suggested to the Divine mind, why He should form it at that time and not before. But this supposes new knowledge to be imparted to the Deity, which is absurd.

4. "Could not God have placed at the head of the human family, on whom the destiny of the rest should depend, one who would not have sinned? If he could not, then it follows that sin could not be avoided, if man existed; and the determination to create man, involved in it a purpose to *permit* the existence of sin. But if it be said, God could have created in the place of Adam, one who *would not have sinned*, but still chose to create one whom he knew would sin, it is as evident as anything can be, that by this selection he did determine to permit sin."\* So that whether we suppose God could or could not have created as the federal head of the race, a man who would not have sinned, we are landed in the doctrine of the Divine permission of sin; much more, if we admit (which is the common Calvinistic belief,) that the same power which has preserved in purity and fidelity legions of angels, and will forever preserve "the spirits of just men

\* For this extract, see Bib. Rep. vol. iii, p. 174.

made perfect," could also "*with the temptation, have made a way of escape*" for our first parents; to deny which, seems very like denying both the power and the truth of God.

Very different, however, is the answer of Arminians to the inquiry, Why does sin exist? They maintain, that on the supposition of man's free agency, the Almighty *could not prevent his fall*; and that after doing all in his power to "secure the accomplishment of his will," he was utterly defeated in his plan! "We never doubted," says Fletcher, "his ability \* \* \* eternally to save all mankind, if he would absolutely do it,"—"the Almighty can overpower all his creatures, if he should be bent upon it, and drive them from sin to *necessitated holiness*, far more easily than a shepherd can drive his frightened sheep from the market," &c. This, according to Arminians, is the sort and degree of power God possesses to *prevent sin*—viz. by "destroying the free will of moral agents." Although, therefore, it was the will of God to prevent the entrance of sin into his universe, he had no method or power to prevent man from sinning, except in "*opposition to his own wisdom, justice, holiness and veracity.*" Can this be the true idea of God?

In the same strain hear Dr. Bangs: "To say that the power of God was adequate to have prevented man as a free agent, from sinning, is a contradiction." (Rep. to Haskel, p. 24.) And Watson: "We may *confidently say* that He willed the contrary of Adam's offense, and *that he used ALL MEANS* consistent with his determination to give and maintain free agency to his creatures, to SECURE *the accomplishment of his will.*" \*

Such is the picture of the Almighty Sovereign drawn by Arminians, and of the government whose helm he holds in

\* And yet Watson had before remarked: "The observations of Doddridge have a *commendable modesty*, viz. 'It will be demanded, why was moral evil permitted? why did not God prevent the abuse of liberty?' One would not willingly say that he was NOT ABLE, without violating the nature of his creatures; nor is it possible to PROVE THIS." Vol. i. p. 435.

his hand ! “ My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Isaiah 46: 10. “ Not so,” replies the Methodist ; “ God often fails to *secure* the accomplishment of his will and pleasure, and that too after using *all means* consistent with the nature of the object he was *striving to secure* ! ” “ He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and *among the inhabitants of earth.* ” Dan. 4: 35. “ However it may be in heaven ! ” answers Watson, “ He is often greatly disappointed of ‘ his will ’ among the ‘ inhabitants of the earth ! ’ ” “ We have obtained an inheritance,” saith the Apostle, “ being *predestinated* according to the purpose of Him, who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of *his own will.* ” Eph. 1: 11. “ To that statement,” replies the Arminian, “ I have several objections : (1.) ‘ Properly speaking,’ God does not ‘ *work all things* ’ at all. I would almost as soon believe the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, as to believe that. (2.) All things are not ‘ after the counsel of his own will.’ For we may ‘ *confidently say*,’ that he used all proper means to secure the accomplishment of his will, in the case of our first parents, and most *signally FAILED* ! (3.) My third objection is, that if we have no better foundation for our hope of the eternal ‘ *inheritance*,’ than ‘ the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his OWN WILL,’ why we may as well strike our colors, and turn Calvinists at once ! ” “ Lord,” says the Psalmist, “ INCLINE not my heart to any evil thing, to practice *wicked works.* ” Ps. 141: 4. “ I object utterly,” says the Arminian, “ to any such absurd Calvinistic prayer ! What ! a Christian pray that God would not *incline* his heart to *evil*, nor *lead* him into temptation, when it is as plain as our best writers can make it, that God could not *incline the hearts of our first parents even to good*, without destroying their free agency ! ” “ Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness,” repeats the Psalmist. Ps. 119: 36. “ Shocking ! ” exclaims Wesley. “ Why does not the Bible ‘ *speak more properly !* ’ ”

"Will they deny," remarks Edwards, "that an omnipotent and infinitely wise God could possibly invent and set before men such strong motives to be obedient, and have kept them before them in such a manner as should have influenced all mankind to continue in their obedience, as the 'elect angels' have done, without destroying their liberty?" "If it is not in the power of God to keep a free agent from sinning, with what propriety can he be directed to *pray* for restraining grace, or that he may be kept from sin? If it is not in the power of God to control the hearts of free agents, and restrain them from sin, according to his pleasure, dreadful consequences may ensue. They might in every respect cross the will of God, and defeat every valuable end the Divine Being proposed in their formation. The good he aimed at in creation may be prevented, irreparable disorders be introduced. The friends of virtue would be filled with lamentation, and the enemies of God and of all good, would triumph and exult. We infer that as God is able to restrain sin among the apostate children of men, who are under the dominion of powerful vicious habits, so we can much more easily conceive that he was able to have prevented sin in beings made originally holy." From all which it is plain, that the problem of the existence of sin in the world, must be solved by saying with Wesley, that while "it was easy for the Almighty to have prevented sin, he saw that it was *best* on the whole not to prevent it." In other words, to permit its entrance and overrule it to his own glory.\*

\* To talk of the Divine Being *permitting* an event to take place, which he is not able to *prevent*, is about as wise as to talk of a man *permitting* the sun to rise, or the wind to blow where it listeth. And yet it is remarkable that Watson seems to adopt this sentiment. "It is obvious," he says, "that by nothing can we fairly avoid this consequence (of making God the author of sin), but by allowing the distinction between determinations TO DO on the part of God, and determinations TO PERMIT certain things to be done by others." Vol. ii. p. 424. Again: "A decree to *permit*, involves no such consequences." Yet he holds that God could not *prevent* sin in free agents!

But while it would be impious to allege that the most Holy God *wills sin* as sin, chooses it *as good*, the source of enjoyment, the fountain of happiness, *as men do*—it may still be his pleasure so to direct and overrule events in his providence, that when *he permits*, sin will come to pass; and this he may do most wisely and holily—yea, though he *hate* moral evil with infinite hatred. This is justified by every enlightened conscience, however *certainly* it is foreknown that the creature will be guilty of the crime. It is in some such sense as this that Calvinists teach the Divine permission of sin, viz. not that God approves of sin, but suffers it to exist, and brings light out of darkness, good out of evil.

We are now prepared to decide what Mr. Foster means by saying to Dr. Rice: “the doctrine of *permission* is Arminianism, not Calvinism.” He means that God *permitted* sin in free agents, because *he could not help it*—very much as a child *permits* the tempest to roar and the lightning to flash and destroy! God might indeed have prevented moral evil by abstaining from the creation of moral agents, or after creation, destroying their freedom—but except on these suppositions, sin *had the mastery*—the *Divine will* in the true sense of the term, was thwarted and defeated.

Now, can this be true? Is not God a most perfectly *happy* being, free from every such thing as pain, grief or trouble? But if any intelligent being is crossed and disappointed, and things turn out contrary to his favorite purposes and desires, he suffers that which is contrary to joy and happiness. And if every act of sin is truly, all things considered, contrary to the Divine will, and God’s hatred of sin is infinite, because of the infinite contrariety of his holy nature to it, then it follows that the Divine will is infinitely crossed in every act of sin. In other words, God endures that which is infinitely disagreeable to him in every sin committed. Hence he must be infinitely crossed, and suffer infinite pain every day in millions of instances—he must be the subject of an immense

number of real and truly infinitely great crosses and vexations, And what is this but to make him infinitely the most miserable of all beings. \* In any such sense as this, Mr. Foster might truly say to Dr. Rice, or any other Calvinist: "I defend the doctrine of permission against *you* who deny it." †

If the proof already adduced be not sufficient to establish the fact that the Presbyterian church do hold and teach the doctrine of the Divine *permission of sin* (not its *efficient causation*), we add the following from that very common work, "Fisher's Catechism," which was composed by the Erskines and James Fisher, of Scotland, A. D. 1753-'65, and can scarcely be called a *modern* production: Q. "How does the decree of God extend to things naturally and morally good?" Ans. "Effectively; because God is the author and efficient cause of all good." Q. "How does it extend to things morally evil?" Ans. *Permissively and directively only.*" Q. "Is the permissive decree a bare inactive permitting of evil?" Ans. "No; it determines the event of the evil and overrules it to a good end." The book is a standard among Calvinists.

Dr. Dick, also, one of Mr. Foster's chief authorities, and a high Calvinist, says: "Our scheme *presupposes sin* as the ground-work of Predestination, and makes the act of God toward the reprobate to be *nothing more* than his purpose *to leave them in their sin*, and to withhold his grace, which he was under no obligation to communicate. God does not will the sins of man or *effect* them by any operation of his power." Again: "The permission of moral evil does not imply an approbation of it." Again: "God permits sinful actions." In proof he quotes Psalm 81: "I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts." "The action is from God; its quality, if it be evil, is from man;" and speaking of Pharaoh: "God did not exert any direct and immediate influence upon his mind, either to infuse wickedness into it, or to con-

\* See this argument at length in Edwards on the Will, part 4, sec. 9.  
† Objections, &c. p. 277.

firm his proud and rebellious disposition”—“the hardening of their hearts, (viz. of wicked men,) is *their own work*, and is ascribed to God only indirectly.”\* Ridgely, another of Mr. Foster’s authorities, says : “*Nothing more* need be supposed on God’s part, in order to the holiest creatures losing their virtue, than only his leaving them to themselves.” Is this the same as saying : “God is *the cause* of all sin”—“works wickedness in the wicked ?”

II. From the discussion of the entrance of sin and its permission, we proceed to a more close examination of its baneful influence upon all classes of the human family. “All,” say the Scriptures, “have sinned and come short of the glory of God”—“Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”—“God hath concluded all under sin”—“In Adam all die.” The curse due to iniquity hath fallen upon the race. “Children themselves,” says Wesley, “suffer; therefore THEY DESERVE TO SUFFER.”†. “Their sufferings, entailed upon them by the sin of Adam, \* \* \* are the result of *justice*.” “The sin of Adam is imputed to infants, who suffer death through him.”‡ “They die; therefore they have sinned, but not by actual sin; therefore by original sin.” “It has been proved that \* \* \* hereby they are children of wrath and *liable to eternal damnation*.”§ These strong statements of the *just* exposure of even infants to suffering and death by “the sin of Adam,” are fully confirmed, as has been shown, by Watson, the greatest of Arminian theologians, thus : “The fact of their being born liable to (bodily) death, a part of the penalty, is sufficient to show that they *were born under the whole malediction*.”¶

These and many similar statements from leading Arminian authors, obviously teach the following doctrine, viz. In virtue

\* Theology, Lecture 36, 24, 41, 43.

† Original Sin, part 3, sec. 2, 3.

‡ Original Sin.

§ Treatise on Baptism. Doct. Tracts, pp. 246, 251.

¶ Vol. ii. pp. 58, 55.

of the representative character of Adam and our covenant relation to him, all mankind, including infants, have “become polluted with sin,” are “subject to *spiritual death*,” or “the withdrawalment of the intercourse of God with the human soul”—“die temporally, because they deserve to suffer and die”—“are born under the whole malediction,” and are “*justly* liable to eternal damnation,” as *really* as infants are justly exposed to *temporal death*.

Such being the deplorable state of sin and misery into which the fall had brought all mankind, suppose that it had been the “good pleasure” of God to leave them all to the just reward or “wages” of their sin : if, as in the case of the angels that kept not their first estate, he had entertained thoughts of mercy toward none of them ; would it have been right or wrong, just or unjust? Calvinists believing the foregoing Arminian statements to be scriptural and true, answer, it would undoubtedly be right and just. But here our Arminian neighbors part company with us ; they allege that the terms of the original covenant, which was “very good,” as all God’s works were, could not be executed without great *injustice* and extreme *cruelty*! And they begin to mutter : “they were *born corrupt*, and so cannot be guilty for this”—“as to their being unregenerate, neither are they *to blame for this*, because it was entirely without their consent.”\* And Wesley, Clarke and the Arminians of the Conference generally agree, “that they cannot find it in the word of God, that *he might justly* have passed by all men”—“and they *reject* it as a bold precarious assertion.”†

But not only do they thus flatly contradict their own statements of doctrine, but they avoid one difficulty by leaping into another. For if you say it would have been *wrong, unjust* in God to execute the penalty of the violated law upon the whole family of man, then it follows that in respect to *that part* of

\* Objections to Calvinism, p. 166, and in other places.

† Doctrinal Tracts, p. 25.

mankind toward whom the punishment would have been *unjust*, “Christ has died in vain,” grace has no meaning nor application, unless it be grace to save those whom it would have been *unjust* to punish, and who therefore stood in need of no salvation. If, therefore, as the Arminian vehemently argues, Christ has *died for all*, and his atonement is a “free gift”—GRACE in its highest sense—then it inevitably follows that *all* might justly have been left to perish for their sin, if such had been the good pleasure of God.

Now let us vary the case a little. Instead of supposing *all* to receive just punishment for their sin—instead of the Divine Being determining that all should receive their just deserts—he resolves, in a most wise and wonderful manner, to rescue from the jaws of death a very large number of these righteously condemned rebels, to stand as everlasting monuments of his condescending love and mercy; while, to illustrate for ever his hatred of sin, he permits the law to take its course, and executes its sentence upon the rest—would it ever enter the mind of any intelligent person, to complain that God was “partial,” because when they were all deserving only of his wrath, and undeserving of his mercy, he executed his wrath upon only a part, and most graciously pardons and admits to his favor, the rest of the guilty rebels? Had he punished the whole, all ground of complaint would have been removed; for Wesley admits that even infants suffer and die, *because they deserve to suffer and die*, and “that their sufferings entailed by Adam’s sin are the result of justice;” and Watson adds, that if they justly die *temporally*, they may *justly* die eternally. Of course, there could be no injustice or caprice: but since he has seen proper to punish only *a part*, he is charged with partiality! “In matters of grace,” says Watson, “no axiom can be more clear, than that he who gratuitously bestows has the right to do what he will with his own.” Vol. ii. p. 443. “Friend, I do thee no wrong. Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” Matt. 20:15. These plain principles

of common sense are so universally admitted, as to have been recognized in the practical administration of all good governments ; and, indeed, are universally acknowledged in all the ordinary walks of life.

Who then maketh the Christian to differ from his former self, and from his impenitent neighbors ? And what has he that he did not receive ? The answer is, “We are his WORK-MANSHIP, *created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*” “ You hath he *quickened* (or *made spiritually alive*), who were DEAD in trespasses and sins.” “ It is God that *worketh* in you both TO WILL and TO DO of his good pleasure.” “ Thy people shall be willing in the day of THY POWER.”

But was there not something good found in the creature, something of the nature of holiness, or moral excellence, to move or induce God to perform the work of spiritual quickening, or restoration to spiritual life ? The answer is, “ He hath chosen (or elected) us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, (not because he foresaw any thing good or holy in us, but) that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” “ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being PREDESTINATED according to the PURPOSE of him who worketh all things after the COUNSEL of his own will.” “ Who hath saved and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own PURPOSE and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” To these very individuals did the blessed Saviour refer when he said, “ All that the Father GIVETH me shall come unto me.” “ Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast GIVEN him.” Again : “ I pray for them ; I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast GIVEN me.” “ No man can come unto me except it were GIVEN unto him of my Father.” “ My sheep hear my voice : they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands. My Father which GAVE them me is greater than all, and none

can pluck them out of my Father's hand." And to the same covenant transaction does the Apostle allude, when he speaks of "*eternal life promised before the world began,*" Tit. 1 : 2 —promised not to men but to Christ, for as many as the Father "had GIVEN him."

"Election of God," as Paul expresses it (1 Thess. 1 : 4), instead of being that horrible doctrine, which it is affirmed to be by Arminians, is the only ground of a Christian's hope —the last refuge of the despairing sinner, when the dark billows overflow his soul. "Eléction of God" is only another phrase for "salvation by grace"—grace begun, continued and finished in the soul by him who is the "author and finisher of faith"—grace, the essential nature of which for ever excludes all merit from the creature, and casts him in utter, helpless, hopeless misery upon the free unmerited compassion of God—grace originating in the boundless infinitude of the Divine mercy, and illustrated in the incomprehensible mysteries of God incarnate, as revealed in the glorious gospel.

But in the arrangements of the Covenant of Grace, were not faith, repentance and good works foreseen, as the *grounds* or *reasons* why his sheep were *given* to the Saviour? The answer is : "By grace are ye saved, through *faith*, and *that not of yourselves*; it is the GIFT of GOD."\* Christ is "ex-

\* Mr. Wesley's understanding of the manner in which faith is the gift of God, is singular enough. He says: "*Believing* is the gift of the *God of GRACE*, as *breathing*, moving and eating, are the gifts of the *God of NATURE*. He gives me lungs and air, that I may breathe," &c. Again: "*Faith* is the gift of God to believers, as sight is to you. The Parent of good freely gives you the light of the sun, and organs proper to receive it," &c. But if this be a correct account of the matter, *unbelief* is as much *the gift of God as faith*, since the powers and faculties by which a man *discredits* Divine truth, are *the gift of God*, as much as those by which he *believes*. If, however, Mr. Wesley designed to teach, that besides the faculties of mind, Divine power and grace impart also the *dispositions of heart* by which a man *welcomes* and receives gladly the knowledge of the truth, in the love of it, this is the high Calvinism of Paul. "It is God that *worketh* in you both to WILL and to DO of his good pleasure." Philip. 2 : 13.

altered to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give *repentance* to Israel and remission of sins." These, therefore, which are the *fruits* of his Spirit, and of his covenant love and mercy, cannot be supposed to be the *grounds* or *reasons* of that of which they are the *fruits* or *results*. Christ himself is "the AUTHOR and finisher of faith." Heb. 12: 2. And the very question to be settled is: What are the grounds or reasons why these and other gifts are bestowed upon Christ's sheep, and not upon others? To say with the Arminian that it is because of foreseen faith, is to make faith *the cause of itself*, is to say that Christ *gives* faith and repentance to certain persons, because he finds them already possessing faith and repentance! Besides, "God hath from the beginning CHOSEN them unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and *belief of the truth*;" where faith and holiness are declared to be the *means*, not the *moving causes*, of their election. Will it be said that sufficient grace is common to all, and that the reason why any one believes and is saved is because he makes a good improvement of the grace given him? We inquire, Is this "*improvement*" a work of righteousness? If so, the Apostle declares repeatedly, "*Not by works of righteousness* which we have done, but according to *his mercy* he saved us;" where he places in strong contrast the two schemes of salvation by works and salvation, by mercy or grace. "*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" "*To him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*" "*But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.*" Rom. 11:6. In such emphatic terms does he teach the impossibility of mingling with salvation by grace, the miserable efforts of man. But if election be founded on man's *improvement*, then, to all intents and purposes, man makes himself to "*differ*," or *elects himself*; so that when the Apostle gave thanks to God for his brethren and for himself, because "*God had from the beginning CHOSEN them unto salvation,*" supposing him to have

been a sound Methodist, we must understand him as follows : “God, I thank thee, that from eternity thou didst foresee that I and my brethren would make a much better *improvement* of thy grace than many of our neighbors, and that we would *choose thee*, and therefore thou hast chosen us unto salvation ; so that with our ‘*good leave*,’ our consent to do, *our part* of the work, and to *make choice* of thee in preference to the world, thou hast *chosen* us ; in view of which great mercies, we render thanks to ourselves in the first place, for our faithfulness, and the great *improvement* we have made, by which we have furnished a reason or ground upon which God hath *chosen* us unto salvation !”

We freely admit that no *pious* person, however Arminian his creed, will ever be found *bold* enough to utter such sentiments upon his knees, in the immediate presence of God. It is a remark no more trite than true, that all *good men* are Calvinists in their addresses to the throne of grace. But it is demonstrably the fact, that notwithstanding all that is said against Predestination, as destroying the necessity and use of prayer and the other means of grace, the objection lies with ten-fold force against Arminianism. The Calvinist believes, that though the means of grace, including *prayer*, are of themselves entirely ineffectual in producing any good result ; yet that God has *ordained* a connection between means and ends, by which, through his power and Spirit, whenever properly employed, his own institutions become efficient to accomplish that to which they are sent. But when the Arminian attempts to pray, what can HE, consistently with his principles, “*inquire for?*” He cannot ask God to *convert* sinners ; for, as we have already seen, he could only mean, that God would “*note*” *their faithfulness*, *the improvement* which they have made, and according to this knowledge, deal with them righteously ; a course which the Most Holy will certainly pursue, whether he prays for it or not. Neither can he request that God will restrain the wickedness of men,

and *incline* them to good; for that, the Arminian thinks, would be such an “efficient control” over their actions, as to destroy their free agency. Nor yet can he pray for grace to enable the sinner to repent and believe; for he contends that every man has already *sufficient* grace and ability. And as to praying for *more grace*, he holds that every man receives grace accordingly as he works for it; and by the supposition, those for whom he prays, have been “careless ones from their youth upward.” The Arminian dare not ask God *effectually to overcome* the rebellious heart; for this would be asking for *efficacious or special grace*, not bestowed upon all men. This would represent the Divine Being as “partial,” and a “respecter of persons.”

Besides, “What the creature will do,” says Watson (vol. ii. p. 435), “in fact is *known* beforehand, with a perfect pre-science;” “and what God has *determined to do*, is made apparent by what he actually does, which can be no new, no sudden thought, but *known* and *PURPOSED from eternity*, in view of the actual circumstances.” Now, will the Arminian inform us, whether he expects *his prayers* will reverse the *perfect foreknowledge* and *PURPOSE* of God, which Watson affirms to be “from eternity?” Well may the Calvinist bless God that he has been led to adopt a system of doctrines which he is not obliged to abandon, whenever he opens his lips to plead for the favor of Heaven upon himself and all mankind.

It may be proper now to glance at that “wise and powerful bounding and otherwise ordering (regulating) and governing of moral agents and their acts, to his own holy ends,”\* which the Scriptures ascribe to God. It is described by Edwards as “God’s moral government over mankind, his treating them as moral agents, the objects of commands, counsels, calls, &c. and as consistent with a *determining disposal* of all events of every kind, in his providence, either by

\* Confession of Faith, chap. 5, sec. 4.

*positive efficiency or permission.*" This Divine providence may be exerted upon the minds of sinful beings in various methods—either by a *restraining* influence, a *subduing* and *softening* influence, a *directing* or a *hardening* influence.\* The Scriptures abound in examples of all these modes of God's *universal determining providence*. Every reader of the Bible will at once recall the illustrations. We have room for only one, but that a most striking one; we mean the case of Joseph and his brethren. Three quarters of a century before the birth of Jacob, the father of Joseph, God made to Abraham this promise: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; \* \* \* and that nation will I judge, and afterward they shall come out with great substance." \* \* \* "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again."† Such was the *decree* or purpose of God. How was it fulfilled? Jacob manifests a very unwise partiality for Joseph; and his brethren hate him on that account. Then come his dreams, and his thoughtless innocence in repeating them, which still further incensed the brothers. Then Joseph is sent alone to search for them, while tending their flocks; they take advantage of the solitude of the place and his unprotectedness, and conspire to murder him, but are restrained by Reuben. He is thrown into a pit; but just then appear the Ishmaelite traders, going down to Egypt; he is taken to Egypt, is sold for a slave to Potiphar, is slandered and thrown into prison, where by interpreting the dreams of his fellow prisoners, he is exalted to a place next to the throne of the Pharaohs! How wonderfully complex this history! How many acts of the will and outbursts of passion were brought into play before the event was reached and the de-

\* Dr. Fisk and the Conference say: "God blinds and hardens their hearts judicially, as a just punishment for abuse of their agency."—*Discourse*, p. 9.

† Gen. 15:13, 14, 17.

cree fulfilled ; viz. that the descendants of Abraham should “be strangers in a land not theirs ?” Now let us look at the part which Divine providence had in all this. When Joseph’s brethren were made known to him (Gen. 45 : 5-8) he says to them : “Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither ; for *God did send me* before you to preserve life ; *God sent me* before to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” Here is the Divine control over a long train of the wicked actions of free agents, so as to secure the fulfillment of the decree. It would, of course, be blasphemy to say that God *produced* by direct influence, or approved the *hatred* of the brethren of Joseph, &c. But thus “God makes the *wrath* of man to praise him, and the remainder he restrains.” It is curious to read Fletcher’s commentary on this passage : “I had rather believe,” he says, “that Joseph told once a *gross untruth*, than suppose God perpetually equivocates.” But where is the necessity for either foul supposition ? “You must not,” he adds, “raise a doctrine upon two sentences which Joseph *spake as a fond brother*, rather than as a judicious divine !” \*

Let this example suffice to show what Calvinists mean when they affirm that “God’s providence extendeth itself to all sins of angels and men, and that *not by a bare permission.*” † “Men do will sin as sin,” Edwards well remarks, “and so are the authors and actors of it. God does not *will sin as sin*, or for the sake of any thing evil ; though it be his pleasure so to order things that, he permitting, *sin will come to pass*, for the sake of the great good that, under his disposal, shall be the consequence.” Such is the Calvinistic exposition of “the decrees of God, whereby for his own glory he hath foreordained *whatsoever comes to pass*,” including sin as just explained. Of course, to allege that, according to our doctrine, “God makes men sinners that he may have a *pretense*

\* Fourth Check.

† Confession of Faith, chap. 5, sec. 4.

to damn them,” \* is a plain breach of a certain precept of the Decalogue.

Nor is it less a calumny to charge Presbyterians with holding the doctrine of “*unconditional* election and reprobation;” in other words, that “some are elected to life and others *unto death, wholly* without respect to their character or conduct, thus leaving sin and virtue entirely out of the question, &c.” † In regard to those who are *saved*, our Confession says, “the effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from any thing foreseen in man” (of the nature of *merit*), “but of his mere love and mercy.” Yet it also says that God “requireth faith as *the condition* to interest them in him” — (Christ). ‡ This is well explained by that eminent and judicious Calvinist, Leonard Woods, D. D. late Professor of Theology at Andover: “Some (errorists) have asserted that the Divine purpose respecting the salvation of sinners is grounded altogether on the foreknowledge of their good works, and in this view have called the purpose of God *conditional*.” “But those things which are spoken of as conditions on the part of man, are not so *in the sense of merit*.” “We hold that impenitent sinners *do no good work* which God regards as a *condition* of their being renewed, or on account of which he has promised them regeneration.” “Now if his merciful act in their renewal to holiness, is *in this sense unconditional*, so is his *previous purpose*” to perform that act. Again we quote Professor Woods: “Does God save sinners *unconditionally*? I answer, God would never have saved them, had not Christ interposed and made an atonement. This, then, is a *condition* of human salvation.” “The condition of eternal life to be *performed by men*, is repentance, faith, obedience. They can no more be saved without these than without the death of Christ.” “Nor did God purpose to save them without these conditions.” Still, as Dr. Woods also affirms, “these

\* Objections, &c. p. 83.

† Ib. pp. 101, 104.

‡ Pp. 51, 156, 157.

are not *conditions* in the sense of merit." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Titus 3 : 5. \* We admit that in the sense just stated, Presbyterians do teach "unconditional election," meaning thereby to exclude *all merit* of good works, from the idea of salvation by grace. And so long as they believe the Scriptures, they can teach no otherwise. But this is not saying that men can be saved without faith and repentance.

The case is even more obvious in regard to what Messrs. Foster and Simpson call "unconditional reprobation;" *i. e.* "men are damned without any fault of theirs"—"given an existence which they are *compelled* to employ in sin," &c.! If any thing further is necessary on this point, we refer to the Commentary of that eminently judicious writer, Dr. Scott: "Wickedness foreseen," he says, "is doubtless *the cause* of the Lord's purpose to condemn; because it is of a man's self by nature, and God condemns none who do not justly deserve it. But holiness foreseen in a *fallen* creature cannot be the cause of his election; because it is the effect of new-creating grace and never comes from any other source. Thus preterition," continues Dr. Scott, "or non-election of a *fallen* creature, is not *gratuitous*, but *merited*; *election*, shown in regeneration, is *gratuitous*." "God may justly leave fallen creatures to themselves, to proceed in rebellion and sink into destruction. He might justly have left all: it is of infinite mercy that any are saved." "Thus he makes them (the saved) willing by regeneration, as says the Psalmist, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;' but those who are not thus willing and diligent, *are not made unwilling* by any positive act of God; but their unwillingness is the consequence of pride, self-will, &c." "The words, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,' imply that *all* deserved wrath: so that 'the lump of clay in the hands of the potter,' must refer to men existing in God's foreknowledge as

\* Works, vol. iv. pp. 50, 51.

*fallen creatures.*” “The language used” (Rom. 9:22, 23), adds Dr. Scott, “viz. ‘vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,’ is not that *God had ‘fitted them;*” but of the vessels of mercy it is, ‘he had afore *prepared them unto glory.*’” \* The difference in the two forms of speech is striking and instructive, as Dr. Scott well observes. Is this the same as “unconditional reprobation,” or that “*God makes men sinners as a pretense to damn them?*”

It would be easy to show that “Reprobation” as now explained, is the common doctrine of the Presbyterian church. “*God CANNOT punish creatures as such,*” says Dr. Ridgely, “but as criminals and rebels; and he must be supposed to have *considered them as such,* when in his eternal purpose he determined to punish them.” † Is this *unconditional* reprobation? In like manner, Dr. John Owen, that giant Calvinist of two centuries ago, second only to the illustrious Calvin himself, when accounting for the fact that “the work of the Holy Spirit is often ineffectual and imperfect upon the hearts of men,” employs the following language: “They faint not for want of strength to proceed; but by a *free act of their own will, they refuse the grace* which is further tendered unto them in the gospel. This *will*, and its resistance to the work of the Spirit, God is pleased in some to take away; \* \* \* but the sin of men and their guilt is in it, where it is continued.” ‡ Is this the same as to say: “*God’s eternal decree \* \* compels them to sin till they drop into everlasting burnings.*” §

Such, then, is the doctrine of Reprobation as held in the Presbyterian church. Woods, Scott, Ridgely, Owen, are standard authorities among sound Calvinists. To allege that such men did not comprehend the logical bearings of their own scheme of doctrine, but by such statements only involved themselves in “great confusion, perplexity and contradic-

\* See his Com. on Rom. 9.

† Vol. i. p. 491.

‡ On the Spirit, vol. i. p. 373.

§ Foster’s “Objections,” &c. p. 100.

tion," \* will serve only to produce a *smile* on the countenance of every intelligent man. Especially when such charges originate with those who had previously *prejudged* Calvinism to be worse than Atheism.

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## LETTER VIII.

### PREDESTINATION—ELECTION—REPROBATION.

REV. SIR—The doctrine of *Election*, as it has been stated in previous Letters, would seem to possess no element which ought to be offensive to any devout mind. It is God's purpose of grace and mercy toward his fallen creatures, and embraces chiefly the following propositions:

1. Man is by nature a guilty and ruined being, having hopelessly destroyed himself by his sin.
2. His most merciful Sovereign provides, at infinite expense, an all-sufficient remedy in the life and death of his Son.
3. This remedy the whole race of guilty rebels, if left to their native stubbornness of heart, would certainly reject and despise, and thus increase their guilt and punishment.
4. He sends his Holy Spirit to subdue and soften the hearts of all who ever become reconciled—having graciously purposed to pardon and restore as many of the rebel race as to his infinite wisdom seemed most consistent with his holy and beneficent authority in the universe.
5. This system of grace was determined and agreed upon in the counsels of eternity, in view of the helpless ruin and misery of mankind—thus election is eternal, not a sudden and unexpected provision for the occasion.

Such is the doctrine of election to eternal life. But the question is instantly presented: Why does not God save more—why not save all? This inquiry is urged with great

\* Foster's "Objections," p. 29.

pertinacity by Universalists, and seems to have been adopted by some Arminians. We might retort upon the latter by inquiring: Why did not God provide salvation for fallen angels? Why, since all power is in his hands, did he create two races of beings which were infallibly certain to be involved in sin, and many of them to suffer endless misery? Why does he continue, even under the gospel, to bring into being thousands upon thousands in each succeeding generation, who, he infallibly foresees, will, after a brief existence in this world, be plunged in the abyss of ceaseless sin and hopeless suffering? Yea, millions whose guilt and misery will be greatly increased by abused mercies—salvation offered but despised.

These are questions which are too high for us—we cannot attain unto them—for who by searching can find out God? Yet they are equally embarrassing to the Arminian. In cases of treason or rebellion against human governments, we know that mercy has often been exercised toward a part, even those not less guilty than others; while the interests of justice and the safety of the innocent seemed to demand the execution of the penalty of the law upon the rest. A procedure which is eminently wise and merciful, and even the dictate of benevolence in order to the stability and permanence of lawful authority, regarding, as it must, the welfare of the whole, may well be transferred from the Executive of Earth to the Supreme Executive of Heaven. Who is prepared to say that if the whole human family were saved, the interests of justice would not have suffered an eclipse? Who will pretend to affirm that the welfare of the whole moral universe would not have been compromised—the order and peace of the creation been exposed to no disaster, if all men were restored to favor?

The Universalist exalts the goodness and compassion of God at the expense of his inflexible justice and holiness; and some Arminians do likewise. “God,” says Adam Clarke, “hates nothing that he has made. He cannot hate,

because he is *love*." (Com. on 1 John 4:8.) We grant that God does not hate his creatures, considered *merely* as his *creatures*, apart from moral qualities. But did not he teach his ancient church to sing—"Thou *hatest* all workers of iniquity?" Psalm 5:5. While he reveals himself as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin"—does he not add—"he will by no means clear the guilty"—"but visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him?" If in one place it is said, "God is love"—if, as Dr. Clarke suggests, He is never called *holiness* or *justice*,—he *is* called "A CONSUMING FIRE." "Clouds and darkness are round about him; yet *justice and judgment* (not *love*) are the habitation of his throne." It is not true, therefore, that according to the Scriptures, "LOVE seems to be the *essence* of his nature, and all the other attributes to be *only modifications* of this."\* Such representations of the Great Being before whose throne cherubim and seraphim cry continually—"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the Lord of Hosts"—are serious errors and lead to mischievous results.

In answer to the inquiry, *Why are not all saved?* genuine modesty will instruct both the Arminian and the Calvinist to say with our blessed Saviour, on a similar occasion—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those which are revealed unto us and our children."

III. A third topic now demands some further attention in connection with Predestination. It relates to the character and *final destiny* of those of mankind who will never realize the saving blessings of the gospel, but will perish under the Divine wrath. The views of Calvinists upon these subjects have furnished abundant matter of denunciation and misrepresentation to our Methodist neighbors. "Does it come to pass that some are lost?" inquires Dr. Fisk (Disc. pp. 26,

\*Clarke's Com. on John 5:8.

27). “Then this was ordained. Was sin necessary as a *pretense to damn them?* Then this was ordained. They (Calvinists) *must believe* that God determined to create men and angels for the *express purpose* to damn them eternally; that he determined to introduce sin, and *influence* men to commit sin, and harden them in it, that they might be fit subjects of his wrath,” &c. &c. &c. Messrs. Foster and Simpson repeat the same story—“Men \* \* \* are appointed to damnation without respect to their deeds.” “Their character and conduct are *forced upon them.*” “They were given an existence which they were *compelled* to employ in sin, that a *pretense* might be furnished *infinite cruelty*, &c !”\*

It requires the exercise of some patience to frame a calm answer to such *arguments!* But if these Arminians had ever read the Presbyterian Confession, they would have found written, of those who perish, that “God was pleased to pass them by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath *for their sin.*” (Conf. chap. 3, sec. 7.) And of those “who do never truly come to Jesus Christ,” that “they are justly left in unbelief, for their willful neglect and contempt of the grace offered them.” (Conf. p. 180.) The reason, therefore, why they are not saved is, that they “*do not come to Jesus Christ.*” They do not come to Jesus Christ, because “*they are justly left in unbelief.*” And they are justly left in unbelief, because of “their willful neglect and contempt of the grace offered them.” “If they will add new obstinacy and hardness to their minds and hearts,” says Dr. Owen, the great advocate of Calvinism; “if they will fortify themselves against the word with prejudice and dislike; if they will resist its operations through their lusts and corrupt affections, God may justly leave them to perish, and to be filled with the fruit of their own ways.” “They perish not by a mere continuance in the state wherein the word finds them, but by

\* Objections, &c. pp. 98, 97, and a large part of the book is in the same general style.

rejecting the counsel of God made known to them for their healing and recovery.”\* Is this the same with “*influencing men to sin, and hardening them in it, as a pretense to damn them?*” The doctrine of *permissive decrees* is the common belief, as we have shown, of our ministers and churches—and therefore all such statements as those quoted from Dr. F. and Messrs. Foster and Simpson, are harmless, except in deceiving the simple.

But Dr. F. and his publishers of the General Conference, assume another offensive position. These, they say, are “smooth things,” designed to conceal the genuine features of Reprobation—and to support this new form of assault, they misquote the Presbyterian Confession (chap. 3) as follows: “Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, *without any foresight of faith or good works.*” From this they seem to infer that the reprobate are equally doomed “*without foresight of unbelief and wicked works*”—a misrepresentation entirely gratuitous.

In the foregoing quotation from chap. 3, sec. 5, Dr. Fisk breaks off in the middle of a sentence, thus—“without any foresight of faith or good works—as *conditions or causes moving him thereto*”—which states simply the fact that as all men are “by nature the children of wrath,” and merit only everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, the design of mercy, the whole plan of salvation in decree and execution, does not flow from any merit or goodness of the sinner “*moving Him*” (God) to elect him—the originating cause of election, and the ground of the determination to save the sinner, was not a “*foresight of faith or good works,*” for of these he would have none until grace should bestow them; but simply the sovereign mercy of God. And indeed, this seems to be the view of Dr. F. himself, when he tells us (p. 15), “God did decree to elect in Christ all that should

\* Exposition of the Hebrews, vol. ii. p. 354.

believe unto salvation ; and this decree proceeds from his own goodness, and is not built on any goodness of the creature.” But on the next page he abandons this sound Calvinism, and seriously asserts that “the sinner is elected because he receives Christ,” which is the same as to say, “he is elected because of something done by himself, some work of his own ; and if Dr. Fisk admit receiving Christ to be a good work (and certainly it is not an *evil* work), then *he is elected because of his own goodness in receiving Christ*, although this writer had said, a few lines above, that the decree to elect is not built on any goodness of the creature ! Alas, for a system that must be supported by such contradictions !

In a previous Letter several quotations were made from the great work of Turretine, who died in 1687, long before Arminian Methodism had an existence, and of course near a hundred years before she had such power as to force Calvinists into logical *hiding places* ! What were his views of Reprobation ? According to Turretine it includes two acts, a *negative* and a *positive*. The negative act is that by which the reprobate are passed by, and are not effectually called and regenerated by the grace and Spirit of God. Regarded as involved in the common mass of sin and corruption, being “children of wrath even as others,” God is under no obligation to save them, nor to bestow any favor upon them ; and the sins of which they are guilty, are the natural fruits of their depraved hearts, and follow the absence of restraining grace as naturally as darkness succeeds the absence of the sun. Nor is God the cause or author of their sins, except as the sun is the cause of cold or darkness. “God denies the grace which they themselves are unwilling to receive, or to retain, and which they voluntarily despise, since they desire nothing less than to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. He does not deny grace that they may sin, but in just punishment for their sin.”

The *positive* act of reprobation, according to our author, "is that by which God has resolved to inflict merited punishment upon persons remaining in a state of nature, and having voluntarily abused (*sua sponte abusos*) the light of nature and of the gospel ministered unto them." "Sin must necessarily be supposed as the condition in him who is reprobated;" "neither can there be in God the will to punish any but a sinner."

"Reprobation," he continues, "may be considered *absolutely* or *comparatively*. In the *absolute sense*, it is rightly ascribed to the corruption of the natural man, which has made him justly an object of reprobation. When, therefore, it is inquired why any man is reprobated, it is well replied—because, *by his sin*, he was deserving of such treatment. But when the subject is regarded in the *comparative* light, when it is inquired why one wicked person is reprobated rather than another (*cur unus praeterea reprobatur*), it must be referred to the good pleasure of God, who elects or passes by according to his sovereign will: sin being common to all, cannot be alleged as the ground of this distinction." "God may be said to predestinate to sin and hardness of heart, not *efficiently*, but *permissively*, and so as to direct and overrule the event"—*non effective, sed permissive et directive, quatenus illam permittere et ordinare decrevit*. Thus he expressly disavows the idea of *positively* hardening the sinner.

Dr. Dick takes the same ground and adopts substantially the same distinctions. In the *negative* act of preterition, he says, "God found men in sin, and in LEAVING THEM THERE, he did no wrong, and was chargeable with no cruelty." Of the *positive* act of condemnation, he adds—"There can be no will in God to punish any but sinners; nor could the intention be just without respect to disobedience." Yet when he views the subject in its *comparative* aspect, he says—"Both classes (elect and reprobate) appeared in the eyes of God to be guilty, polluted and worthy of death. Their sinfulness, therefore, could not be the reason of the rejection in the one

case, rather than in the other"—since it was common to both, and "did not cause the rejection of those who are saved."\* "We do not ascribe to God an absolute power to consign his creatures to misery without consideration of their guilt. \* \* \* Such a Being could never be the object of our confidence and love." "Preterition is the act of God in the character of a judge, fixing beforehand the punishment of the guilty;—sin is *the cause* of their destination to perdition."

Ridgely, whose "Body of Divinity" has had a very wide circulation both in Europe and in this country, and was especially approved by the learned Professors of Aberdeen and other divines of Scotland, takes the same ground. "It is not to be supposed," he says, "that the decree has in itself a *proper efficiency* to produce the thing decreed; for then there would be no difference between an eternal decree and an eternal production of things, contrary to the Apostle—'whom he predestinated, them he glorified.'" Rom. 8 : 30. "God, in his eternal purpose, considered man as fallen \* \* and he might have left the whole world to perish without being liable to the charge of injustice." And in commenting on those words—"whom he will, he hardeneth" (Rom. 9 : 18), he says, "God forbid that any one should think that there is a *positive act* contained in those words, as though God infused hardness into the hearts of any."† Pages might be transcribed to the same effect, from all our leading theologians. Yet such Calvinists as these Messrs. Foster and Simpson represent as teaching—"God made them sinners, that he might have a *pretense* to torment them for ever, to the glory of his sovereign justice."

It has been proved in a former Letter,‡ that these Arminians hold and teach "the eternal and irresistible decree of Reprobation;" and according to Fletcher, "the number of the elect is certain," and of course the number of the repro-

\* Lecture 36.

† Vol. i. p. 485, 489.

‡ Letter VI. at the beginning.

bate is equally *certain*, in the Divine foreknowledge. When Mr. Wesley was forty years old, 1743, and had been nearly twenty years a minister, he wrote as follows : “*I do not deny* (though I cannot prove) that he (God) has *unconditionally* elected some persons to eternal glory.”\* But Arminians most vehemently argue that “unconditional election,” in the case of adults, includes “unconditional reprobation.” Of course Mr. Wesley could “not deny unconditional reprobation,” as a necessary consequence of “unconditional election.”

The doctrine of *efficacious*, or *irresistible grace*, has been the topic of much denunciation to Arminians. But here, as in other cases, they generally contend with “a man of straw.” Calvinists believe and teach that men may “resist the Holy Ghost”—“grieve and even *quench* the Spirit.” But the question is not whether men often stifle the operations of the Spirit of grace, but whether, when it is the good pleasure of God to convert and save a sinner, he is *able to employ sufficient power to secure his object?* In other words, whether God is able to use means and influences which will *overcome* his depraved heart and all its *resistance*; or whether the sinner may so *resist* the Spirit and grace of God, as to *overcome* the Almighty, and *defeat* his design or purpose of mercy? Calvinists believe that God is able to conquer all resistance. Arminians take the opposite view, viz. that grace is not so *irresistible*, but that the sinner in many cases gets the better of Omnipotence. Of course it would be folly to pray to the Divine Being to do what he is *unable* to perform. On this scheme, the prayers should be offered to the sinner, to obtain his “good leave,” as Wesley has it, to be converted, and then the work would be easy.

Mr. Wesley admits that “all men are by nature not only sick,” but “dead in trespasses and sins”—and that “it is not pos-

\* Works, vol. iii. p. 289. The editor of his works says these “extreme concessions were made in the early part of his ministry, for peace sake”—a mistake.

sible for them to *do anything well* till God raises them from the dead.”\* This agrees with the Methodist Article VIII.—“We have *no power* to do good works pleasant and acceptable without the grace of God, by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will and working in us while we have that good will.” How then are these helpless ones to be delivered? Mr. W. answers—“I believe that the grace of God which brings faith and thereby salvation into the soul, *is irresistible* at that moment.” Again, “I do not deny that in some souls, the grace of God is so far *irresistible* that they CANNOT BUT BELIEVE and *be finally saved*.”† For the most part, however, he thinks “grace does not act irresistibly.” But if it *may* act thus in some cases, consistently with man’s free agency and the nature of true virtue and holiness, then it may so act in all cases.

Speaking of Saul of Tarsus, Mr. Watson says: “Can a man be conceived further from Christianity than Saul, the *moment prior* to his reception of it.” “His heart burned with rancor and cruelty.” “A hotter brand surely was never quenched in the blood of the Saviour.” “Only a miracle could reclaim such a man.”‡ “It will be freely allowed,” he adds, “that men are sometimes suddenly and *irresistibly* awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger by the Spirit of God. \* \* \* Sometimes even independent of any external means at all;”§ and Wesley says “there are exempt cases, wherein the overwhelming power of Divine grace does for a time work as irresistibly as lightning from heaven.”¶

These and many similar statements from leading Arminians, would seem to teach with great clearness the doctrine of

\* Sermon on working out Salvation. If men are by nature “*dead in trespasses and sins*,” and must be “*begotten again*,” be “*raised from the dead and quickened into life*,” “*created anew in Christ Jesus*,” &c. it would appear to be an easy question: What sort of power is required to perform these mighty acts?

† Works, vol. iii. p. 289

‡ Inst. part 2, chap. 28.

‡ Sermon on Conversion of Saul.

¶ Sermon on Spread of the Gospel.

Paul—"It is God who works in you both to *will* and to do of his own good pleasure." The great difficulty is to reconcile these correct statements with others from the same general source. "Consult your own experience," say Messrs. Foster and Simpson; \* \* \* "you will find that your consent was not produced by *irresistible power*." But how was it produced? "At last, they say, in the utmost extremity, forgetting all, BY A MIGHTY EXERTION, (viz. of your *own power*, as we are obliged to conclude) *you embraced the atoning sacrifice—you believed*." "Then came rest."\* We can very readily believe, from the character of his book, that Mr. Foster's conversion *was* the result of some such *mighty exertion* of his own power!

The chief difference between the "*irresistible grace*" of Arminians and that of Calvinists, appears to be in this: we teach that when *it pleases God* according to his own purpose and grace, to change the heart and convert any particular soul, **HE CAN DO IT**—he can work in that soul "both *to will and to do* of his own good pleasure," as Paul affirms. The Arminian, on the contrary, believes that this *good pleasure* and design of God to produce conversion is often frustrated and defeated, because the sinner refuses to make "*the mighty exertion*" necessary to his salvation! Thus they tell us: God does for such "*all* that infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless love *can do*, without forcing them to be saved." † But if this be so, what folly to pray to God to do *what he cannot do*! Why not offer the prayers to the sinner, beseeching him to make "*the mighty exertion*" and thus enable God "to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within him!" This is obviously the only right method of proceeding in the case, particularly as all men have "*sufficient grace*" and, of course, need no more!

So also, when explaining Rom. 8:28, "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be *conformed* to the

\* Objections, &c. pp. 172, 173.

† Doct. Tracts, p. 6.

image of his Son," Wesley says: "God predestinated to be conformed" "those who are conformable," *i. e.* that *could* be conformed. But if this has any meaning, it means that God undertakes the easy cases, which his power can manage! But the very hard cases are not predestinated, not being conformable!

It was shown, in a former Letter, that an intelligent being thus crossed and disappointed in his most benevolent plans and intentions, must be infinitely miserable; but besides this, if one person may *successfully resist* the most gracious designs of the Infinite One, there was no certainty that *any should be saved*, even though salvation was bought with an infinite price. Thus the Divine promise to Christ: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and the *pleasure* of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," might have been falsified.

Thus Satan, according to Arminians, often has the mastery, and succeeds in controlling and subjecting the wills of men, where God *fails of his designs*. Nor is there any certainty that in the future world the same result will not appear. Satan, indeed, may be bound; but if the human will of our first parents, in a state of perfect holiness, could not be controlled, but on the contrary *defeated* the purposes of the Almighty, who "used all means in his power to secure the accomplishment of his will," viz. that Adam as a free agent should remain holy—if, I say, such a disaster occurred in the garden of Eden, in defiance of all the efforts, designs and resources of God, why may it not occur in heaven? It is easy to say that foreknowledge forbids the possibility of such a result. But that only increases the difficulty, by suggesting the idea of *fate*—a something independent of and controlling the goodness, and wisdom, and perfect plans of the Almighty! Nor can any reason be assigned, on Arminian principles, why souls which so often "fall from grace" in this life, and that, too, after they have attained to "perfection," may not fall even *from heaven!* The holy angels, too,

have no better assurance of everlasting life. It follows, therefore, on Arminian principles, that at some future period, all the redeemed and all the holy angels may, like Adam, fall from purity, and the work of Christ be utterly and finally frustrated. It will not do to say that the *promise* of God forbids such a supposition. Perhaps he has promised what he cannot perform! If our first parents and thousands of the unconverted have *defeated* his will to *make* or *keep* them holy—if his agency and will have proved so *resistible*, that thousands have successfully resisted it, in defiance of all the resources of infinite power and benevolence—who can tell but that it may be so in the future world? Certainly no Arminian has any security on which to build his confidence of eternal glory.

It has been demonstrated that *irresistible grace* was taught by Mr. Wesley; but it is taught by modern Arminians in a much more offensive sense. We prove this as follows:

1. Dr. Clarke teaches that “as in Adam *guilt* came upon all men, so through Christ the *free gift* comes upon *all men* (including the heathen) unto *justification* of life”—“and a measure of the Divine light is actually communicated to every heart.” “God,” he says, “has not denied to the Gentiles the light and influence of his Spirit.”\* This light, he teaches, is communicated to the Gentiles, “as in Adam *guilt* came upon all men;” which, so far as relates to his posterity, is, of course, *irresistible*.

Mr. Fletcher also teaches, in the most express terms, the *irresistible* nature of this universal grace, thus: “The benefits of \* \* \* a day of salvation and of the *free gift* came upon all men to the justification mentioned, Rom. 5 : 18; and so far from *depending on the will of the creature*, \* \* they depend no more upon us than our sight and the *light of the sun!* All those blessings \* \* \* are *irresistibly* bestowed upon us for Christ’s sake, \* \* \*

\* Com. on Rom. 5.

As the Divine image \* \* \* was at first bestowed upon our first parents, \* \* \* our penitential grace comes immediately and *irresistibly* from God our Redeemer. \* \* \* I say *irresistibly*; because God does not leave *to our option* whether we shall receive a talent of *redeeming* grace or not, any more than he left it to Adam's choice whether he should receive five talents of *creative* grace or not.”\* From these extracts, it appears that this universal grace which “lighteneth every man that cometh into the world,” is *irresistible* as the gift of creation, or the original image of God. But Mr. Wesley affirms “that salvation by irresistible grace makes man *a mere machine*, and consequently not rewardable or punishable.”† How then can it be true, according to Dr. Clarke, “that as this (universal) grace is *offered*, so it may be *received*”—and “all may *improve and retain* the grace they receive,”‡ *i. e.* this *irresistible grace*? In what proper sense can “*a mere machine*” *receive and improve* grace? Will it be replied, that this “*irresistible grace*” is not “*salvation*,” but only the *beginning* of salvation? Still this does not mend the matter; for how can “*a mere machine*” receive and improve even these *beginnings* of salvation? And especially how can this “*working of a mere machine*” enable it to get *more grace* as the *reward of improving* its *irresistible grace*? And how can *the machine*, when thus worked by *irresistible grace*, become *punishable* for not improving it? These, we confess, are *mysteries* in Arminian theology which we have never seen cleared up.

2. But there is a further very serious difficulty attending this Arminian doctrine of universal, *irresistible* grace. It is to this *grace* that all the *sins* and *sufferings* of mankind are attributable. Without this “*irresistible grace*,” they assure us, the posterity of Adam could have neither *sinned*, nor *suffered* at all! We prove it thus:

\* Genuine Creed, Art. 3      † Doct. Tracts, p. 50.      ‡ Com. on Rom. 5 : 15.

(1.) Says Dr. Clarke—"This heavenly *light* shines into the soul of every man," \* \* \* and through this light \* \* \* what is termed *conscience* among men is produced. No man could discern *good from evil*, were it not for this light thus supernaturally and *graciously* restored.\* And in his Discourses before quoted (p. 77), Dr. C. says—"Had man been left just as he was when he fell, he in all probability had been utterly insalvable, as he appears to have lost all his spiritual light \* \* \* even his *moral feeling*." "So would have been all his posterity, had not some *gracious principle* (irresistible grace) been supernaturally restored, to give them some knowledge of *good and evil, virtue and vice*, and thus bring them into a salvable state." But if these positions be correct, then the condition of mankind by the fall, would have evidently been such that they could neither *sin* nor be *punished*, since they had blotted out conscience, moral feeling and all sense of right and wrong—in other words, had ceased to be free, intelligent moral agents, and were no better than *mere machines*. Thus all their sins are of free, irresistible grace!

(2.) Fletcher teaches the same doctrine of "*gracious* free agency."† And the General Conference in their "Doctrinal Tracts"‡ say—"Man hath his freedom of will, not naturally, but by grace," i. e. by "*irresistible grace*." But mankind without "*freedom of will*," could of course *commit no sin*, nor justly suffer any punishment. It follows, therefore, that to "*irresistible grace*," Arminian *grace*, all the crimes, pollutions, sufferings and sorrows of the posterity of Adam are to be ascribed! Such is the wonderful "*light which lightenth every man that cometh into the world*." Besides, if "*irresistible grace*" makes man "*a mere machine*," how could it possibly restore "*freedom of will*"—i. e. to a "*mere machine*!"

\* Com. on John 1:9.

† Genuine Creed, Art. 4.

‡ Tract on Election and Reprobation, p. 154.

(3.) But worse than all — this doctrine of “irresistible grace” is in fact *irresistible* reprobation to eternal death. Let us look closely at this matter.—

This *grace*, according to Arminians, is bestowed *irresistibly* upon all men of every clime, age and nation, and had been given to those who were in hell when Christ died. Without it, they say, they could not have sinned, nor could they have suffered. What object, therefore, had the God of mercy in view in **FORCING** this “irresistible grace” upon those to whom he infallibly foresaw it would result in their own destruction ? Fletcher answers—“It reproves their sins, it galls their consciences, it renders *them inexcusable*, \* \* \* it clears God’s *justice*, it shows that the Judge of all the earth does no wrong, and it begins in this world the *just punishment* which righteous *vengeance* will complete in the next.” These, he says, are “*the less desirable effects*” of “gracious free agency,” or “irresistible grace.” Here again is the old difficulty—for without this grace, men would have been *excusable* and God could not have *justly* punished them ! And as all except Universalists, admit that thousands perish under this system of Arminian *grace*, and as they were infallibly known to the author of this grace before he forced it *irresistibly* upon them, does not this amount to the doctrine of unconditional reprobation in its worst sense, viz. it forcibly deprives men of all valid *excuse* for their conduct, makes it just in God to punish them, and begins their punishment even in this world, preparatory to “the righteous vengeance” of the next : and these are “desirable effects” of grace ! Would it not have been much more “desirable” to withhold this “irresistible grace” from all who were known as infallibly certain to misimprove it and perish by means of it ? How cruel to *force* this grace upon them—“which they never at any period consented to and which they never could avoid.” “Does not God know that these poor wretches cannot help” this “irresistible grace?” “How came these

miserable creatures in their condition of sin and wretchedness? They were put there by the decree of irresistible grace."\*

In conclusion of this whole subject, it is obvious that *irresistible* "unconditional reprobation" is an Arminian doctrine. Nor is it less plain, that "unconditional reprobation" is no part of Presbyterianism. Such writers as Fletcher, Wesley, Fisk, &c. who make this charge, are themselves the guilty persons. We hold that the finally lost are "doomed *for their sins*," which they freely commit. If the Arminian reply—Were not their *sins* decreed? We answer—Yes; they were decreed *permissively*, not otherwise. Calvinists teach no "irresistible grace" or any other Divine influence to make men guilty, without excuse, and exposed to the vengeance of eternal fire! This is Arminianism—pure and unmixed. Thus they trace the sins and sufferings of guiltless men directly to the will of the Creator.

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## LETTER IX.

### THE ATONEMENT, ITS NATURE AND EXTENT.

REV. SIR—Upon the importance of scriptural views of the great fundamental doctrine of Atonement, Arminians and Calvinists are agreed. Error here is like disease of the heart—its morbid influence will be felt in every extremity of the system. Let us look at this subject in its Arminian aspects.

### III. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIAN METHODISM IN CONNECTION WITH THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

In the 20th Article of your system, we read as follows: "The offering of Christ is that perfect redemption, propitia-

\* Objections, &c. pp. 124, 97, 83, 136, 166. In these extracts we have substituted "irresistible grace" for "corruption," "depravity," &c. of the original.

tion, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual." Before stating our objections to this article, it may be proper to mention some points in which we agree. So far as regards the essential *nature* of the work of redemption, we judge your article expresses the truth, viz. "that Christ," as affirmed by Watson, "died for us as a substitute, bore the *punishment* due to our offenses;" and after quoting the texts, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed"—Watson adds: "these passages prove a *substitution*, a suffering in our stead"—"our iniquities, (*i. e.* their *punishment*) are made to meet on him, they are laid upon him, the *penalty* is exacted from him." "The death of Christ," he adds, "is explicitly represented in the New Testament as *penal*, which it could not be in any other way than by *his taking our place* and suffering *in our stead*." To sustain these views, he quotes largely such passages as these: "Christ offered one sacrifice for sins—gave himself for our sins"—"the Son of man came to give his life a *ransom* for many"—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," &c.\*

To this testimony, Rev. N. L. Bangs adds: "The law of God being *completely satisfied* by the obedience of Christ unto death, it can have no just demands upon those for whom satisfaction was made. And if the law has no demand, there can be no condemnation."† Now if these statements be true, as we believe them to be, it seems to the Calvinist a most natural and necessary inference that all this could not have been done "for all the sins of those who are finally lost"—therefore not "for all the sins of the whole world." But of this more hereafter.

We also agree with Arminians, that the *value* of our Lord's satisfaction, in itself considered, is infinite, that it possesses an intrinsic *sufficiency* of meritorious obedience and sufferings

\* Theol. Inst. part 2, chap. 20.

† Reformer Reformed, p. 186.

to save the whole of Adam's race. This follows from the *nature* of his work, the infinite *dignity* of his person, and from the effect of the *representative principle* on which he acted. Thus, as Dr. Miller has said—Christ's obedience and sufferings were such “that *nothing more* would have been necessary if all mankind had been saved—there would have been no *scantiness* in the provision of mercy—but an *ample foundation* is laid for a sincere offer of salvation to all who hear the gospel.” Of course Calvinists regard it as a blessed privilege as well as a duty, to offer salvation through the blood of atonement to all men of every class and generation. “Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely.” Why then do we object to the Article as already quoted?

First, because it is irreconcilably at variance with other features of the Arminian system. Both parties agree that in the Atonement man is contemplated as fallen. But it has been abundantly shown in previous Letters, especially when we were considering the subject of “Original Sin,” that man in his fallen state “had lost,” if Arminians speak the truth, “his freedom of will,” and was no longer a free agent. Of course he was incapable of sinning; and his actions were no longer *punishable*. Adam, indeed, sinned freely, in eating the forbidden fruit, and for him an atonement was necessary. But for all his posterity, the first and principal effect of the atonement was to render them “*inexcusable*,” and expose them to sin and misery here, and eternal vengeance hereafter! But can these be considered as the distinguished fruits of infinite mercy and grace? Is this the character, according to the Scriptures, of God's “unspeakable gift?” And how can our blessed Lord be said to have made “a perfect satisfaction for all the sins” of those, who but for his *satisfaction*, would have *had no sins*? And then as to those who die in infancy, “they were born corrupt and so cannot be guilty for this.” “Were they to *blame* for an existence and nature which were *forced* upon them—which never at any period they consented

to, and which they never could avoid.” \* These infants had never committed any actual sin, and were not *to blame* for their corrupt nature ! It follows that they had no need of any “satisfaction for sin,” for they *were not sinners!* How then could Christ have made a “perfect satisfaction” to Divine justice for the sins of “the whole world?” Especially how can he be said to have bought salvation for those who die infants, since they needed no salvation ?

2. We object to the Article that it teaches universal salvation. If all of every description of character have a “perfect propitiation and satisfaction” completed for them, how can any be lost? Wesley answers—“Because they believe not on the Son of God.” But is not this unbelief a sin, yea, the worst of sins? Then the Article declares that a perfect satisfaction has been made for *it*, as well as for all other sins. How then can it be a cause of perdition? If it be just to punish *this sin* with everlasting torments, after a “perfect propitiation and satisfaction” have been made for it, it will be equally just and right to punish *all sin* for which Christ died. Both law and justice, then, will take the redeemed sinner by the throat at the day of judgment, and each urge its demand, “pay me what thou owest,” as inexorably as though no Saviour had ever suffered and died for his salvation. Who then can be saved?

Again : Both parties teach that unbelief is a *great sin*—but the Article declares that *all sin* is atoned for by “a perfect satisfaction,” and we are assured that “the law is perfectly satisfied and can have *no just demand* upon those for whom satisfaction was made.” Such are the express words employed by Dr. Bangs. How then can the law condemn, when its penalty is perfectly paid? How can justice hold the criminal bound, after he has been perfectly redeemed? How can the Judge pronounce sentence when he has been perfectly satisfied? Most manifestly, therefore, this article, when inter-

\* Objections, pp. 166, 125.

preted on Methodist principles, teaches the doctrine of the salvation of all, without exception.

To evade these logical conclusions, the Arminian abandons the sound doctrine of his 20th Article. He attempts to explain away the obvious meaning of the terms as follows: "that by the death of Christ, the sins of every man are rendered *remissible*, and that salvation is consequently attainable by every man."\* Thus the benefits of the "perfect satisfaction" to Divine justice, by which all *legal demands* are canceled, are nevertheless *contingent*, i. e. "are poised on the possibility of believing or not believing, leaving it to the will of intelligent beings to turn the scale."† But if this be the true doctrine, then the Scriptures must teach a mere *conditional* atonement, and the sinner stands justly exposed to the *whole penalty*—though Watson and Bangs say, "Christ bore the *punishment*, met the just demands due to our offenses!" And if the result had been that all mankind had *inclined the scale* of their will the wrong way, as many do, the "perfect satisfaction," the bearing of the *punishment* by our Lord, must have been utterly in vain. But is this consistent with the promise made by the Father to the Son—"thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power." Ps. 110. So when the inspired writers tell us—"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water; *he turneth* it whithersoever he will"—"It is God who worketh in you both to *will and to do* of his own good pleasure"—these and scores of similar passages are subject to a *condition*—*provided the soul will consent to poise the scale the right way!*

The Arminian scheme is therefore totally at "variance with the very nature of the Saviour's work. It is an *at-onement*; that is, a reconciliation; and to talk of his making an atonement for such as are never reconciled, is a contradiction in terms; it is to say he makes atonement (*AT-ONE-ment*, as the word is; makes God and man *at one*), and yet

\* Watson's Inst. chap. 25.

† Clarke's Com. on Acts 2.

makes no atonement in the case of the same individuals. He is said to give satisfaction for sin ; but how can he have given satisfaction for the sins of those on whom the law is to take satisfaction eternally ? He is said to appease Divine justice ; but can the justice of God be appeased in the case of those against whom its flaming sword shall awake for ever ? —to expiate our offenses ; but how can those sins for which the guilty perpetrators are to suffer everlasting, have been expiated ?—to redeem from the curse of the law ; but how can those who are to be kept in eternal thraldom, have redemption through his blood ?—to propitiate the wrath of God ; but how can those be interested in his propitiation who are the objects of Jehovah's unceasing displeasure ? It supposes him to be the Saviour of those who are never saved, the Redeemer of those who are never redeemed, the Deliverer of thousands who are never delivered, but remain under eternal condemnation.” \* To say that, although made for all, it does not save *some*, because they do not *believe*, is to overlook the fact that thousands have never *heard* the gospel ; and “*how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*”—and “*how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*”—and how shall they be saved, if “*they call not on the name of the Lord?*” Rom. 10 : 13, 14. The argument is from the pen of inspiration. “Let God be true.”

3. We object to this doctrine, because it cannot be supported by its ablest advocates, without arraying the designs and purposes of God against each other. The Arminian believes that the blood of the Sacrifice was shed with *the design* on the part of God, *to save* all mankind. But Watson affirms expressly, that “*what the creature will do is known beforehand with a perfect prescience;*” “*and what God HAS DETERMINED TO DO in consequence, is known and PURPOSED from eternity in view of the actual circumstances.*” Well, if Christ perfectly and infallibly *knew* those who would continue

\* Symington on Atonement, p. 192.

in sin and perish, and had “PURPOSED from eternity” to destroy them, is it reasonable to suppose he died with a *design* or *purpose* to *save* them? In other words, that he died with a purpose to *save* the very persons whom he had before *purposed* to destroy!! And yet Watson strongly objects to “the Calvinistic opinion,” because it implies that God “*never intended*” to save a sinner whom “*from eternity*” he had “*purposed*” or intended to destroy!!

So also, Messrs. Foster and Simpson, after quoting Dr. Rice, say: “This quotation \* \* \* teaches that Christ did *not die with a design* to save all men.”\* Of course, they hold that our blessed Lord “*did die with a design* to save all mankind.” Yet Arminians seriously tell us, “God from the foundation of the world (of course, before men were born,) did foreknow \* \* \* all not believing. And, according to this, his foreknowledge, \* \* \* refused or reprobated all disobedient unbelievers, as such, to damnation.”† In other words, the design or purpose to “refuse or reprobate to damnation” was formed from eternity; and the *design or purpose* to save those same persons was included in Christ’s death! Thus he died with a purpose to save the identical persons he had from eternity *purposed* to destroy!

The question of the Extent of the Atonement is not fairly stated by Watson: “Whether our Lord Jesus Christ *did so die* for all men, as to make salvation *attainable* by all!” (vol. ii. p. 285.) We maintain the infinite intrinsic value of Christ’s finished work; and if this writer mean that with the light, teaching and special influences of the Holy Spirit, salvation is *attainable* by all at some period during their natural life (not *attainable* when Christ died, and thousands were already in the prison of despair), we have no controversy with him; but if he mean, *attainable without* the special aid of the Spirit, this is true of no one, unless it be true

\* Objections, p. 201.

† Doct. Tracts, p. 140.

that saints *beget themselves* unto a lively hope, instead of being “begotten of God.” The true hinge of the controversy is the *design* of God in sending his Son into the world, and the *intention* of Christ in expiring on the cross.\* If the design and intention were to save all, while many are *not saved*, the plan of the great God has been entirely frustrated, and he has been disconcerted and disappointed. Besides, if this has occurred in this life, under the mediatorial reign of the Son of God, what certainty can there be that it will not occur in the future world? God indeed *designs* that saints shall be for ever holy and happy; and on the strength of his *intention* has promised them an eternal inheritance. But if his plan has once met with defeat and disappointment, what assurance can we have that it will not be so again? It may be replied, that God’s infallible foreknowledge proves it certain that his promise will not fail. But, on the Arminian scheme, if the *designs* and plans of Deity are defeated and fail, why may not also his foreknowledge? Besides, God’s infallible foreknowledge demonstrates the absurdity of the idea, that his designs ever *do* fail. What can be more derogatory to the character of “the only wise God,” than to suppose him to form designs and plans, and employ means for their execution, while he is *infallibly certain* that they will be utterly frustrated and defeated! For example, he *designs* to save a sinner, whom he *infallibly knows* will die in sin, and whom he *designs*, in consequence of his sin, to punish for ever! Still he *designs* to save him, and employs large and expensive means to secure the very result which he *designs shall never be secured*. Dr. Clarke’s is the best remedy here: viz. to suppose that God does not *choose to know* certain events, when such knowledge is rather inconvenient to a favorite theory!

4. We object to the Arminian doctrine, because in repre-

\* “Non quæritur,” says Turretine, “de pretio et sufficientia mortis Christi. Sed agitur de destinatione Dei mittentis filium in mundum, et de intentione Christi morientis”—*Loc. Dec. Quart. Quæstio 14.*

senting the *design* of Christ's death to be to save all, it contradicts many express passages of Scripture. There we discover the DESIGN of the Atonement revealed in such terms as the following: "Christ *loved* the CHURCH and *gave himself* for IT, that *he might sanctify and cleanse it*—that he *might* present to himself a glorious church, not having *spot or wrinkle*, but that it *should be holy and without blemish*." Eph. 5:25, 26. Again it is, "That he MIGHT redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:14. Again, "That we *might live through him*." 1 John 4:9. Again, "He suffered the just for the unjust, that he MIGHT bring us to God." 1 Pet. 3:18. Again, "He was made SIN for us, that we *might be made the righteousness of God in him*." 2 Cor. 5:21. Again, "He bare our sins in his own body, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." 1 Pet. 2:24. And even when God is said to have "so loved the WORLD," it is, that "WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH on him, should not perish." In all these passages, with many more that might be adduced, there is connected with the atonement a *special design* of mercy, which can in no way be supposed to pertain to those who shall finally perish. For example, did the Saviour DESIGN "to sanctify and cleanse"—"to present without spot or wrinkle," "holy and without blemish"—"to redeem from all iniquity, that they might live"—"to bring to God"—and "make the righteousness of God in him"—did he *design* these infinite favors for those, who he "knew beforehand with a perfect prescience," would live and die in sin, and whom he had "PURPOSED from eternity in view of the actual circumstances," *to destroy*, as Watson himself is compelled to admit? Surely no unprejudiced person can suppose that the *design* of the Redeemer's death was to save these unhappy ones, equally with those who are purified from sin, and crowned with glory, honor and immortality.

The limitation is even more strikingly brought into view in the following passages : "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant *justify MANY*; for he shall bear their *iniquities*." Is. 53 : 8, 11. "I lay down *my life for the SHEEP*." John 10 : 15. "I pray for them; I pray not for *the world*, but *for them which thou hast GIVEN me*." John 17:9. Can any reasonable person imagine that these texts are consistent with the supposition that Christ "prayed," "was stricken," "bore the iniquities," and "laid down his life," equally for all mankind? On the principles of the Arminian, Christ's *love* in giving himself for *his people, his church*, which is compared to the peculiar special affection of the husband for his spouse, means after all, nothing more than the universal good will or compassion which he entertained equally for all others. Can this be true? He "shall JUSTIFY many." Why? Because "he shall bear their iniquities." But if he bore the iniquities of all, he will justify all. He is the GOOD SHEPHERD. What is the proof? He lays "down his life *for the sheep*." But if he laid down his life equally for those who never *were*, nor ever *will be* his sheep, what becomes of the proof of his peculiar care and kindness as the good Shepherd? Or will it be said, his sheep mean all mankind? The Shepherd will himself give a different decision "at that day." "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25 : 34.

5. We object further, that Christ in his character of Intercessor, clearly limits the *design* of his death. Thus, John 17:9, "I pray for them: I pray not for *the world*, but for them which thou hast *given me*." For what purpose did he pray? "That he (Christ) should give eternal life to AS MANY as thou hast given him." John 17:2. They were *not of the world*. But were there not others for whom he

prayed? “Neither pray I *for these alone*, but for them also which SHALL BELIEVE on me through their word.” John 17:20. And what is the burden of his prayer? “That they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” The Arminian believes that Christ died for all, though he prays or intercedes only for some. He gives his *life* for them, but will not give his *prayers!* Or if, in express contradiction of the Saviour, he asserts that he prays for the world, or all mankind, then he must believe that his prayer *does not prevail*, in many instances, that they “may be with him where he is”—though he himself has said, “I know that thou hearest me *always*.<sup>1</sup>”

Another part of the all-prevalent intercession of Christ is, to secure the gift of the Comforter, that he may “abide with his people forever.” John 14:16. To his success in procuring this best of all gifts, the Apostle alludes (Gal. 4:4, 6), “God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we MIGHT receive the adoption of sons.” “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.” The Arminian doctrine requires us to believe that Christ hath *redeemed* thousands, with whom the *Comforter* does not abide; who *disappoint* and *frustrate his design* that they should receive the *adoption of sons*. He is unable to conquer their reluctance, and make them “willing in the day of his power.”

6. It is a very serious objection to the Arminian scheme, that it represents the plans and merciful efforts of the persons of the adorable Godhead as crossing each other; and thousands are *redeemed* by Christ who are never *born* of the Spirit, but continue under the bondage of corruption, and lie down in everlasting sorrow. But if this be possible, what reason can be given why the death of Christ might not have been utterly and forever unavailing, with respect to the whole human race? Besides, so far is it from being true that all are *redeemed*, that it is the song of the ransomed in heaven—

“Thou hast *redeemed* us to God OUT OF every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Rev. 5:9. If it be inquired, why is the atonement made effectual for only a part of the race of mankind?—we inquire in turn, why was it provided for any? why provided for man, and not for the angels who kept not their first estate? Why is the way of one man hedged up with a thousand means and influences to turn his feet into the path of peace, while another is beset with almost every form of allurement to vice and ruin? “Why is it,” to employ the language of Watson, “that men are sometimes IRRESISTIBLY awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger by the Spirit of God”—“and sometimes independent of any external means at all”—(vol. ii. p. 447)—while others, in the use of all the ordinary means, remain insensible to the last? Why did the Saviour give thanks that these things were *hid* from the wise and prudent, from the self-righteous, and the formalist, while publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of grace and glory? “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

7. The difficulties multiply continually in the way of the Arminian Article before quoted, as we examine the inspired records. Christ’s “people” are called “his church which he hath *purchased* with his own blood.” Acts 20:28. But if Arminianism be true, he equally *purchased* all mankind! He was their “surety” to obtain their eternal salvation—they are his “peculiar people,” his spiritual *seed* (Psalm 22:30), whom the Father loved and “*gave him out of the world*,”—whom he loved and gave himself for (Eph. 5:25), his *body*, his *sheep*, his *elect*. Can this be said of all mankind?

The “one offering” of the cross is never said to be designed merely to put men into a *salvable state*, by procuring power and liberty for God to offer lower terms of salvation to mankind—but as intended for actually *saving* his people “from their sins” and the consequent miseries. His satisfaction to law and justice is represented to have been an in-

finitely *meritorious price* or ransom paid for inestimable benefits, pardon, reconciliation, acceptance, adoption, sanctification, victory, glorification. Thus as Adam's disobedience was effectual to *condemn all* his natural seed, so Christ's obedience unto death equally and to like extent justifies, "makes righteous," all his church, his spiritual posterity. Rom. 5:12-21. So also salvation is styled "the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14), which cannot mean merely "a salvable state."

8. If Christ died equally for all men, as much for the lost as for the saved, then in a great measure he has lost his end or object in the great work of Redemption—"either through want of wisdom he laid his plan extremely ill, or through want of power or mercy he is unable to execute it. Thus he must have thrown away his infinitely precious life for millions who are never saved—for millions who were at that very time in hell and beyond the reach of mercy—for millions whom he never informs of it and never calls to believe on his name, any more than if they were devils."\* Such are some of the hopeful fruits of the dogma, which asserts the *design* of the Redeemer's death to have been to *save all*, as much Cain and Judas, as John and Paul; as much those who were in hell, as those who inherit heaven. If to have the wisest, and best, and most merciful designs thwarted, and the kindest intentions and purposes disappointed of their execution by wicked creatures, can produce vexation and chagrin, the blessed Redeemer, on Methodist principles, must be infinitely mortified and miserable.

9. The same train of scriptural reasoning will suffice to refute an Arminian evasion. It has been said that "although a '*perfect satisfaction*' was offered for all men, yet it *was not accepted* for their *actual sins* (in which is included unbelief), until men comply with the gospel conditions." What a degrading view of the glorious work of redemption is this! The

\* John Brown of Haddington.

blessed Jesus came into this world of guilt, lived a life of sorrows, and died a death of infamy, “to finish the work” his Father had given him to do for the salvation of men. “It is finished,” he cried upon the cross, and gave up the ghost. The work was completed; a “perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction,” were made for lost sinners. But after all these sufferings, and sorrows, and groans, and tears, and blood, *it availeth nothing*; “it is not accepted.” Why? because men do not repent and believe!

But is it not said that the Lord Jesus not merely *satisfied*, but “*magnified* the law and made it honorable;” that “God is *well pleased* for his righteousness’ sake;” that “He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, *to give repentance* to Israel and remission of sins;” and that *faith which is the gift of God*, is also a blessed fruit produced by his death and inwrought by his Spirit? Thus, if the Scriptures speak the truth, both faith and repentance are the *fruits* of his sacrifice, the gifts of his Holy Spirit. Christ is “the author and finisher of our faith.” Unbelief and impenitence are the thick clouds which dissolve in the blessed beams of “the Sun of righteousness.” And so far from these preventing the *acceptance* on the part of the Judge of the offered atonement, they are a main part of the evil, the deadly malady which it was designed to heal. So he understood the subject who said, “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **MUCH MORE** being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him *freely give us all things?*” So also, “I lay down my life for my sheep, and they *shall never perish*, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Do these passages teach an atonement *offered*, but *not accepted*? Shall sinful man venture to reverse these promises of Almighty God, and affirm, “Christ lays down his life for his sheep” (or all mankind), and thousands of them *do perish*, and *are plucked out of his hand*? He that spared not his

own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, *will not* with him freely give us all things—*will not* grant us faith and repentance, the gifts of his Spirit, through the blood of atonement. Shall a sinner, redeemed by the omnipotent arm of Jehovah, be a bond-slave of Satan for ever? Shall he bestow the highest blessing at his disposal, and deny a *minor benefit*? Shall he perform the *greater*, but refuse the *less*? All the perfections of the ever blessed God conspire to answer, No!

10. A further difficulty presses upon the aforesaid Article of Methodist faith. It represents the ever blessed God in a light in which it is impossible to shield his character from cruelty and injustice. We believe it can be fairly and logically substantiated, that the doctrine of universal atonement, as taught by Methodists, implies a foul aspersion upon the character of Jehovah. For, notwithstanding her avowed belief of a “perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world,” Methodism teaches that thousands of the human family will be driven away into unquenchable fire, to satisfy Divine justice for sins for which there is already paid a *perfect satisfaction* by the all-perfect Saviour. In other words, that a God of infinite mercy, after his holy law and his impartial justice have been “perfectly” satisfied for all sin, will demand everlasting sufferings of the sinner, as a further satisfaction; which is, to require a double payment of the debt; the first made by Christ, full and perfect, yet so *imperfect*, as to require the sufferings of the sinner to all eternity to complete it—a satisfaction (made perfect by Christ) which does not satisfy; and the sinner is condemned to suffer for ever to make perfection perfect; a perfect satisfaction, which shall be perfectly satisfactory!

Again: It is not denied, that it was *infallibly known* to Christ, when about to “die the accursed death,” that many would not be saved by his sacrifice; but that their guilt and punishment would be greatly aggravated, if his blood were charged to their account. What then can be more revolting

to every right feeling, than to suppose that the blessed Saviour, in that awful and tender hour when he poured out his soul an offering for sinners, was performing for thousands *that* which he *infallibly foreknew* would be of no real benefit to them, but only sink them down under tenfold vengeance to the prison of despair? If this is what Methodism terms the *freeness of grace* and the *fullness of Divine mercy* in the universal atonement, truly her “tender mercies are cruel.” These are some of the beauties of that system which is so arrogantly extolled as superior to all other forms of religion. “Consistency is a jewel,” which Methodism seems resolved shall never glitter in her diadem.

If it were my object to write a labored treatise on doctrinal points, many additional arguments would be adduced to sustain the Calvinistic view. But let us look for a few moments at the doctrine of Atonement taught in the Scriptures? It is that Christ is “the Saviour of all men, *especially* of them that believe.” He is the Saviour of all—his sacrifice secured important benefits not only to this world, but to the universe. It was an illustrious monument of the Divine justice and hatred of sin, and the highest display of infinite grace and mercy. The subjects of God’s universal empire looked on and drank in lessons of everlasting wisdom. He is the Saviour of all. The exalted character of the Divine victim, and the intensity of his sufferings, impart a value to the atonement *sufficient* for a thousand worlds. He is the Saviour of all, *but not in the same sense* in which he is “*especially* the Saviour of them that believe.” The work of obedience, suffering and death, has been well and fully performed—the sacrifice of “the Lamb of God” possesses a *sufficiency* more than commensurate with the ruin and curse introduced by sin. On the ground of this *sufficiency* the gospel proclaims, “Ho, every one that thirsteth—Whosoever will, let him come—All things are now ready.” The sinner hears this call of mercy, and despising its invitation, dies a

suicide. The gates of mercy were open, and he will have no just cause of complaint, if, whilst turning his back upon the glories of heaven, and freely choosing the road to ruin, his will was not subdued by the Spirit of grace, nor he “compelled to come in.” No principle of truth or justice will be violated in permitting the rebel, in the exercise of perfect freedom, to make such a disposition of his time, talents and active powers, as was most agreeable to himself; nor in inflicting deserved punishment for perverseness and abuse of distinguished mercies. If others are “*made willing* in the day of Divine power”—if “God works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure”—it is an act of infinite grace to *them*, but of no imaginable injury to those that perish—they remain precisely where they were, *and would have been*, if God had performed no act of power to make others willing to be reconciled and restored to his favor. If this be “partiality,” show the injustice or the caprice implied in the charge. If God has “a right to do what he will with his own,” there is no injustice. If he may, for wise reasons in his eternal mind, *select from the mass of guilt and wretchedness the objects of his infinite charity*, there is no caprice. “Who art thou that repliest against God?”

Let us now consider some of the most plausible objections to the Calvinistic view of the Atonement, derived from the terms, “*all*,” “*every man*,” “*the whole world*,” employed by the sacred writers in connection with the death of Christ.

(1.) These terms are the stronghold of the Universalist, and are therefore a suspicious refuge for the Arminian! Not only does the Universalist satisfy himself that such phrases include “all men;” but *all* the devils, as in Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20. Nor is it easy to perceive how the Arminian, on his principle of interpretation, will answer his argument from these and similar passages.

(2.) These terms will often bear no other than a limited sense. Exod. 9:6—“*All* the cattle of Egypt died.” Same

verse—"Of the cattle of the children of Israel (which were all in Egypt) *died not one.*" Matt. 3 : 5, 6—"Jerusalem, and *all Judea*, and *all the region* round about Jordan, went out to him (John) and were baptized." Did John baptize every man, woman and child in that district? Matt. 10 : 22—"Ye shall be hated by *all men* for my name's sake." Does this include the pious, and those who never heard of the Apostles? Luke 2 : 1—"There went out a decree that *all the world* should be taxed." "And *all* went to be taxed." Can this literally mean every individual of mankind? Rom. 1 : 8—"Your faith is spoken of throughout the *whole world.*" Surely not among those who had never heard of Christianity.

Dr. Clarke, the Methodist commentator, owing to his Arminian notions, is compelled, in a remarkable instance, to adopt the limited interpretation of the term "world." In expounding John 17 : 21, he says: "We have already seen that the word *world* is used in several parts of our Lord's last discourse, to signify the *Jewish people only.*" Thus, when our Lord says, "I pray not for the world," he means, according to Clarke, "I am not yet come to that part of my intercession!" I am not now praying for the Jews! And he then refers us to verse 20th of the same chapter: "Neither pray I for *these alone* (my twelve disciples), but for them also *which shall believe on me* through their word." Here the Saviour begins to pray for *the world*, i. e. for "them *which shall believe on me!*" And again, says Clarke, "He does not pray for *the world*, the rebellious Jews, because the cup of their iniquity was full." Under the guidance of such a skillful expositor, the terms *world*, *whole world*, &c. can occasion no trouble to the Calvinist.

When the term *world* signifies persons, it sometimes denotes the Roman empire, as in Acts 11:28, Rom. 1:8, or it means the Gentiles as distinguished from the Jews, or even but *a part* of the Jewish people, as in John 12 : 19, or the wicked men of the world, as 1 John 4 : 4-5. Thus when

the Pharisees said of Christ—"Behold, *the world* is gone after him"—the term of course included only a small number of the Jews and a few Gentiles in the crowd.

(3.) In explaining such phraseology, it should be kept in mind that the Jews had imbibed a strong prejudice that they were always to continue the peculiar and highly favored people of God, to the exclusion of the Gentiles. Not so, say the Apostles. The gospel embraces in its large provisions *all men, the whole world*, without distinction of Jew or Gentile, bond or free.

(4.) These general terms often denote men of all sorts and ranks and conditions, high and low, rich and poor. Thus Paul made himself a servant to all. 1 Cor. 1:19. But no text can be found which affirms that Christ died in the law-room of all mankind, with a design to save them, and as their surety and representative. One plain, express, unequivocal declaration to this effect would settle the question—but it is not to be had.

(5.) Calvinists, as before stated, earnestly maintain that there is a very important sense in which the Saviour died for all—that is, *sufficiently* for all. So that if all had been saved, there would have been required "no more sacrifice for sin." No soul will perish because of a deficiency in the merits or intrinsic worth of the atonement. That we hold to be, in the strictest sense of the terms, infinite—absolute—all-sufficient. By what authority, then, does Watson affirm that "on the Calvinian theory the bar to the salvation of the non-elect lies *in the want of a provided sacrifice for sin?*" Such hardihood of assertion ill becomes a master in Israel.

This view of the intrinsic sufficiency of the atonement, furnishes a satisfactory answer to another Arminian cavil, viz. that "on the part of the non-elect, unbelief is no sin," and that for all men to believe in Christ for salvation, would be for many of them to "believe a lie."\* This would have

\* Objections, p. 152.

some force, if we were required to persuade men that Christ died with an equal *intention* to save them all ! We command ALL, in the name of the Most High God, to believe that the work of sacrifice and propitiation is finished, and that the only obstacle to their salvation is in *themselves*. This is no “lie,” but a great *truth*, and they are righteously bidden to believe it. They have all the faculties requisite for understanding, believing, accepting and loving this truth—all that is wanting is the right dispositions or affections. For this want they are responsible. These wrong dispositions are no better excuse than if a son should say to a very kind father—“I hate you so intensely I cannot love you !”

But, retorts the Arminian, “perhaps Christ did not *intend* to save me. What use, then, in my endeavors, prayers, &c ?” Let us look closely at this plea. We will take a parallel case. God made a promise to Noah for all mankind, that “while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest shall not cease.” Gen. 8 : 22. But sometimes he sends a nipping frost in June, which *reverses* this promise over a large extent of territory. Suppose the husbandman should say—“I do not know whether it is the *intention* of God to give me a harvest next summer—therefore I will neither plow nor sow. God has made it my *duty* to cultivate the soil, and denounced *idleness* as the hateful parent of many crimes—but as he has not revealed his *intention* in regard to the next harvest, what use in my endeavors, rising up early, and eating the bread of carefulness ?” This would be a pure *Arminian husbandry*, and like sloth, it would soon bring its advocate to *rags*. A preacher of this sort of *agriculture*, might argue very logically—“Know you not that if God does not *intend* to give you a harvest, you will not get it ? Why should you labor ; you cannot make one blade of wheat grow ? Why do you take trouble about that which Omnipotence alone can perform ? What folly you are guilty of ! Plow, harrow, sow,

fence—for what? Will not God fulfill his *intention* not to give you a crop, if such it be?"\*

"But still it may be said, if it be not the Divine *intention* to give me a crop next summer, why should I believe his promise? Gen. 8:22. Does he not thus require me to believe a lie?" This, we admit, would be sound *Arminian* logic. But so long as plain, good sense has the control, the farmer will say—"God's *promise* is my encouragement to industry and every other duty—his secret intention is no rule of conduct to any one." Thus Calvinism and common sense will be found to preside over all the affairs of men, except where a false system has introduced confusion among the religious activities of the soul.

A similar train of reasoning applies to the question of human life or death. Job says—"Man's days are determined, the number of his months is with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." But when a man of sound judgment is taken sick, he does not say—"If God has determined that I must now die, it is of no use to take either food or medicine!" Even the Arminian acts the Calvinist under such circumstances, takes to his bed, sends for the doctor, and swallows his nauseous compounds in the orthodox way, without waiting to settle the previous question whether "God has appointed *his* bounds," so that he cannot pass "over *this crisis* in his history!" This is common sense in relation to the soul as well as the body.

The scriptural principles and reasonings adduced in this Letter, will suffice to solve every difficulty which Arminianism constructs in the way of the truth. The same God rules in both the kingdoms of nature and of grace, and "doeth *his pleasure* among the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth." The more entirely and unresistingly we can

\* See this sort of argument in almost these words, Objections, &c. p. 137, and in many other places.

pray, “Thy *will* be done,” the more of the spirit of true filial devotion we possess. This is the true, the only method of assuring ourselves that “our names are written in the book of life of the Lamb, from the foundation of the world.” Rev. 17:8; 13:8.

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## LETTER X.

## FALLING FROM GRACE.

REV. SIR—In my last I finished the discussion of the Arminian views of Atonement, viz. “a perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins” of mankind, the chief, grand effect of which is to render “sin *remissible* and the sinner *salvable*.” The satisfaction made by Christ, it was also shown, might have been barren of any further fruit, since if one sinner disappoints the gracious designs of the almighty Redeemer, *all* might have done likewise, and there would have been absolutely no remedy! God the Father did indeed promise that “*his work* should *prosper* in the Mediator’s hands” (Isa. 53); but that depended on a variety of contingencies, such as “the good leave” of the sinner, and the poising of his will aright. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the early Arminians coming out boldly, and using such language as this—“I believe that the death of Christ might have *had its end*, though never *any man had believed*”—“that it may so come to pass, that none at all fulfilling the condition of the new covenant, *none might be saved*,” and “that the efficacy of the death of Christ depends wholly on us.”\*

The doctrine of the final, irrevocable fall of some of those who have obtained an interest in “the efficacy of Christ’s death,” and become “his sheep,” is of course a natural con-

\* Owen’s Display, &c. chap. 9, where the original Latin is given.

sequence from such premises. And it is equally plain, that if all who ever were or shall be true Christians should finally perish, Christ's death would equally have "had its end!"

In the light of these extraordinary positions, as maintained by Arminians, we proceed to examine,

#### IV. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIAN METHODISM, ON THE SUBJECT OF "FALLING FROM GRACE."

There is no dispute whether true believers may fall for a time into grievous sins, and thus incur God's displeasure, grieve his Holy Spirit, and lose the active exercise of grace and their spiritual comfort. Neither is there any room for doubt, that if left of God to their own strength, they must inevitably fall and perish. *The only question* is, whether those whom God "hath accepted in the Beloved," effectually called, "begotten to a lively hope," purchased "with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb slain," and sanctified by his indwelling Spirit, are ever so forsaken of God that they totally and finally fall into sin and damnation. This we cannot believe, for the following reasons:

1. The concessions made by the more judicious Arminians, go far to prove the exceeding doubtfulness of their positions. Thus the General Conference, speaking by Mr. Wesley—"I am sensible either side of this question is attended with *great difficulties*, such as reason alone could never remove."\* This is the tone of a wary, prudent man, and very different from the following: "To embrace it (the doctrine of perseverance,) is to act in advance of, if not to *abandon common sense!*" Again: "Is this Christianity? Is this iniquitous teaching (the doctrine of perseverance,) *to be palmed upon the world as God's truth?*"†

\* Doct. Tracts, p. 211. Arminius himself says: "I declare very frankly, that I have never taught that a *true believer* will finally and totally fall away and perish." Bib. Repository, for April, 1831.

† Objections, pp. 197, 199.

Again : Mr. Wesley, at one period of his life (1743), said : "With regard to final perseverance, I incline to believe that there is a state attainable in this life, from which a man CANNOT *finally fall*, and that he has attained this who can say, 'old things are passed away, &c.'"<sup>\*</sup> Observe, (1.) Mr. Wesley here takes high Calvinistic ground, too high for most Presbyterians. Substitute for Mr. W's. *cannot*, the phrase *will not*, because God's grace prevents—and then you have the true doctrine. (2.) According to Messrs. Foster & Simpson, Mr. Wesley was, at that time, "*inclined to*" "abandon common sense," "the known conviction and consciousness of all Christians," adopt "the fate and absurdity of the (Calvinistic) system," &c ! We infer, therefore, that he had beyond all doubt "fallen from grace!" The ground and evidence of this *sad fall* are found in his "strong desire to unite with Mr. Whitefield and to cut off, as far as possible, needless dispute.<sup>†</sup> Whether these were crimes of sufficient magnitude to produce such a *fall*, we will not venture to decide.

So also when Watson and Wesley, as before quoted, adopt the doctrine of "irresistible grace," the former affirming that "men are sometimes suddenly and *irresistibly* awakened by the Spirit of God;" and the latter, "that Divine grace does for a time work *as irresistibly as lightning from heaven*;" and when Wesley adds, "I do not deny that in some souls the grace of God is so far *irresistible* that they CANNOT *but believe and be finally saved*"—this is certainly the doctrine of *final perseverance*; and that too in an extreme form which few Calvinists would be willing to indorse. If these extraordinary acts of mercy are performed for the *elect few* among Arminians, why are they not performed for others ? Is not this Arminian *partial grace*? If this irresistible "lightning" sort of conversion elects or chooses some, how cruel to leave the rest to perish without the requisite flash ? Is this what Arminians mean by "merciless tyranny?"

\* Works, vol. iii, p. 289.

† Ibid.

2. The perfections of God present an insuperable difficulty in the way of the doctrine of "falling from grace." He is *infinitely just*, but the surety of the covenant has satisfied Divine justice; Christ has purchased his church with his blood, even every individual soul of that church; and of course the believer is safe with such a "friend at court." On the theory of the Arminian, the soul may be formed in the image of Christ, a new creature, and become the temple of the Holy Ghost. She may be interested in the "perfect redemption and satisfaction" made for all her sins. She may be justified before the righteous Judge, and have all her transgressions blotted out through the tender compassions of a covenant-keeping God. Justice may be satisfied, the law honored and magnified, and the new-born spirit placed under the care of the great Shepherd, who ransomed her with his blood, whose love is immutable, as his power is infinite. *But all in vain.* To-day, the soul is embraced in the arms of an almighty Saviour, bears his image and is sealed with his blood—to-morrow, she is the victim of malicious fiends, exulting over her agonies amid the horrors of eternal woe. Yesterday, *all her sins* were forgiven, through a "perfect propitiation and satisfaction"—to-day, all her sins are charged to her account; Christ's perfect atonement avails not; but the dread penalty of the violated law is poured upon her devoted head. Yesterday, the soul was one of Christ's sheep, of whom he has said, "*They shall never perish—I know them, and they follow me*"—to-day, it is one of those to whom he says, "*Depart ye cursed, I never knew you.*" Yesterday, she was acquitted and accepted as of the number of the "good, whose steps are ordered by the Lord; who, though they fall, shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand," (Ps. 37 : 23, 25)—to-day, she is found guilty, rejected as vile, and falls to rise no more! Does the blessed Saviour mean what he says, "*I know them?*" But at the day of judgment, he will say to those at his left hand,

*“I never knew you.”* How could this be true, if he *had known* many who were once his sheep, but now declares he *never knew them?* Thus the *truth* of God is implicated.

God is *unchangeable*, and loves his people “with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness does he *draw* them.” Jer. 21:3. How then can he *hate* those whom he loves with an “everlasting love?”

God is infinitely *wise and powerful*. But is it consistent with this truth to suppose that he new-creates by his Spirit *to-day*, the soul which *he has* “purposed from eternity,” as Watson says, to cast into hell *to-morrow*? Paul did not think so—for he was “confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, *will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” Phil. 1:6.

God is infinitely *faithful* to his Son, and to all his promises. Therefore his “*elect \* \* \** are kept by his power through faith unto salvation.” 1 Pet. 1:2-5. The promise to the Redeemer was that “a seed should be given him,” that those whom the Father had promised him should come unto him, be taught of God, receive the Spirit and be raised up at the last day. Those blessings involve the certain *salvation* of all on whom they are bestowed. He is “the good Shepherd—lays down his life for the sheep—loves *the church* and gave himself for it.” Arminians seem to adopt the New School notions—that the death of the Saviour merely makes *pardon possible*, but was not designed *to save*, not to purify, not to bring us near to God. Very different is the promise of Jehovah—“I will put my fear in their hearts, that *they shall not depart from me.*” Jer. 31:40. “The righteous shall hold on his way.” Job 17:9. “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.” John 6:5. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Rom. 8:30. Thus the Scriptures represent true believers as firmly *established*, and on an everlasting foundation; immovable like Mount Zion, as a rock, or a house built on a rock; they are

God's *jewels*, his peculiar treasure which shall not be lost; and as a spring whose waters fail not, as trees whose leaf shall not wither. Thus too their graces, in virtue of their union with Christ as "the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," are an "incorruptible seed," "the seed of God which *abideth* in them." 1 John 3:9. So that their faith overcomes the world, fails not, and their hope never makes ashamed.

3. To suppose redeemed and regenerated souls to perish, is inconsistent with the honor of all the Persons of the Trinity. Of the Father, who promised them to the Son as the reward of his mediatorial work—of the Son, who "bought them with a price, even his own precious blood"—of the Spirit, whose temples they are, who is a perpetual fountain within them, "springing up unto everlasting life,"—and who is the earnest of their inheritance, the infallible seal of God, confirming them to everduring happiness.

4. The *intercession* of Christ demonstrates the falsity of this Arminian notion. "He is able to save to the uttermost." Why? "Because he ever liveth to make intercession for those that come unto God by him." Heb. 7:25. "Him the Father heareth always." "I pray for them, not for the world,"—"I pray for them also which *shall believe on me* through their word." And what was the object of his prayers? To Peter he said—"I have prayed for thee that *thy faith fail not.*" And again—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, BE WITH ME WHERE I AM, that they may behold my glory." "Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me." John 17:9, 11, 24. The *persons* for whom Christ intercedes, are "all that shall believe on him." The *objects* he prays for, are their *being kept* in the exercise of unfailing faith, and their final glorification with him. Does he ever ask and not receive? Here is his own reply—"I know that thou hearest me always." On the Arminian scheme all these precious

assurances are falsified in various instances, and the very *truth* of him who is THE TRUTH, is made of none effect!

5. The *certainty* of final salvation to all who are “new-created in Christ Jesus,” and “raised from the dead, according to the mighty power whereby God raised up Jesus,”—is further evident from the peculiar phraseology employed. So firmly established is the promise, that it is represented as *already fulfilled*—they “have everlasting life.” “He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation.” John 5 : 34. “They are preserved forever—they cannot sin,” *i. e.* cannot fall into permanent, habitual sin; cannot become *sin-doers*, as the original signifies. So “it is God that *justifyeth*,” pardons, accepts, and saves them—“who is he that condemneth?” “And *there is joy* in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repented.” Why this joy? Because “he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways, *shall save a soul from death.*” Jas. 5 : 20. Was this joy ever premature?

6. The same conclusions follow from the *reasons* which inspired men assign, when accounting for the *apostasy* of certain persons. Thus “the beloved disciple:” he is warning the church against “the love of the world,” which is the very spirit of antichrist. Some had already fallen: “They went out from us.” Why so? Because “THEY WERE NOT OF US.” “For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued *with us*. But they went out from us, that they might be *made manifest* that they were not all of us.” 1 John 2 : 19. Observe, he does not say, “they were once Christians,” but “they *were not of us*,” *i. e.*, they *never were* Christians, otherwise they would have continued with us.

7. The blessed Saviour, “the way, *the truth* and the life,” clearly asserts the impossibility of deceiving *finally* his own people. Thus: “False Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, *if it were pos-*

*sible, even the elect.*" Mark 13 : 22. The Arminian, however, feels no such difficulty or hesitation in admitting the *possibility* of deceiving the elect. "We *have proved*," he says, "that the number of the elect may be diminished." \* So also, when the covenant-keeping God promises to David, as an illustrious type of Christ: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my mouth. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will *not lie unto David.*" Psalm 89 : 34, 35. The General Conference reply: "God did break the covenant of his servant." "He did alter the thing that had gone out of his lips." "God *did also fail David.*" We will not "return railing for railing;" but there is strong temptation to ask: "Is this Christianity? Is this iniquitous teaching (of Arminians) to be palmed upon the world as God's truth?" †

We have thus endeavored to condense into brief space a number of the leading arguments which overthrow the Arminian doctrine of "falling from grace." It may be proper now to notice objections to the reasoning employed. To evade the force of such texts as those cited requires some polemical skill. As, for example, when Paul inquires, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and adds his persuasion that neither death nor life, &c. should be able to separate us from his love. The Arminian adds, "Very true, if Christians hold fast their *integrity.*" In other words, if they persevere, *they will persevere!* "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" i. e. replies the Arminian, *if they remain Christ's sheep.* In other words, the promise is, "If they remain his sheep, *they shall remain his sheep!*" "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;" that is, if they do not depart from God, *they shall not depart!* "The righteous shall hold on his way;" i. e. if he *does hold on his way!* "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: though he fall, *he*

\* Watson's Inst. vol. ii. p. 340.

† Objections, &c. p. 197.

*shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord uphouldeth him with his hand.*" That is, if he continues to be a good man, he shall not be utterly cast down. In other words, if he do not fall, or falling, *riseth up again*, he shall not *remain cast down!* And if he hold *himself* up, the Lord will uphold him with his hand! According to Methodist interpretation, these consolatory passages, which have filled the Christian's bosom a thousand times with unutterable joy, are nothing more than identical propositions. "If such an event take place, *it will take place!*"

In like manner (John 14 : 19), "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, *shall never thirst*, \* \* \* but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He shall never thirst." It is a pitiful evasion to say that he *shall not thirst* while he is drinking, but that if he gives over using this water, he shall thirst again; for this was true of the water of Jacob's well, as well as of the living water with which it is placed in contrast. It is obviously taught that "he shall never thirst," because the *fountain* springs up within him, *i. e.* the Spirit shall continue to inhabit those to whom he has been given, till the work of glorification crowns the whole.\* In confirmation of this reasoning, Paul in 2 Cor. 1 : 21, 22, says, "He which *establisheth* us with you in Christ and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also *sealed us* and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." "He hath *sealed us*." A seal was employed to mark possession, to secure treasures or to authenticate a title to property. Thus the Holy Spirit *marks* believers as the peculiar people of God, *guards* them as his precious jewels, and *establishes* and ratifies their *title* to everlasting glory. These are the very blessings for which the Saviour prays: "Holy Father, *keep* through thine own name those that thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are," "Because I live, ye shall live also." The very *living*

\* Turretine, *De Perseverentia*. Dick's Lectures.

*faith* which Peter needed to sustain him under the buffetings of Satan—the very *guardianship* which God alone can exercise over the soul, are the objects for which he prays. To interpret all this as the Arminian does: “They will be kept, if they ‘watch and pray,’” *i. e.* *keep themselves*; “they will finally *be with Christ*, if they do not stop in the way,” is puerile in the extreme. For the gracious affections which prompt the soul to persevere in watching and praying, and in every good work, are the *very gifts* which Christ asks of his Father, the *very mercies* which the Father, in answer to his intercession, always bestows, and “the *very living water* which springs up in the soul into everlasting life.” It is not denied that spiritual life, like that of the body, may exist in almost an infinite variety of degrees, just as a wasting disease often gradually saps the foundations of health, until scarce a shadow of former strength remains. But still there is *life*; the principle of life lingering so as to render it often-times very difficult to decide where the precise point of dissolution occurs. Something of this sort, except the final issue, pertains to the *health* of the soul. So there is a natural sleep, which is “the image of death,” and there is a collapse of the physical powers, which still more resembles death. But in these cases the vital principle, though temporarily inactive, is not extinct. Something of the same nature is doubtless felt in the experience of many who are true Christians; but the *reasons* of it belong not to this discussion. To the mind of the Calvinist, however, few truths revealed in the Scriptures appear more demonstrably evident, than the doctrine of the final perseverance of all who are “bought with the blood” of Christ. The opposite, or Arminian doctrine, strikes us as most dishonorable to the knowledge and wisdom of God, and to the perfection and efficacy of the “finished work” of atonement. Nor is it more adapted to cherish false views of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Ruler, than to confuse the spiritual perceptions and dry up the consolations of true

believers. "If I could believe *these things*," says the venerable Dr. Miller, "I must consider the character of God as dishonored; his counsels as degraded to a chaos of wishes and endeavors; his promises as the fallible and uncertain declarations of circumscribed knowledge and endless doubt; the best hopes of the Christian as liable every hour to be blasted; and the whole plan of salvation as nothing better than a gloomy system of possibilities and peradventures; a system, on the whole, nearly if not quite as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned as in the paradise of God."

Let us next examine some of the more common *objections* to the Perseverance of Saints.

1. It is objected that it denies man's *free agency*, and leads to the doctrine of *Fate*. To prove this our Confession is quoted: "They whom God hath accepted in the Beloved and sanctified by his Spirit, CAN neither totally nor finally fall away." "True believers CANNOT fall totally or finally from grace."\* This is said to mean that believers "have no sufficient power" to fall from grace,† but are mere machines, under "unavoidable necessity and controlled by fate," and of course "no longer free." But in employing such terms to express only a strong degree of *certainty*, Calvinists closely copy the Holy Scriptures. Thus Joseph's brethren "COULD NOT speak peaceably to him." "Those having eyes full of adultery, CANNOT cease from sin." "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed CAN be—the natural man CANNOT know the things of the Spirit." "They that are in the flesh CANNOT please God." "No man CAN come to me, except the Father draw him." Interpret these and similar passages according to Bishop Simpson and Mr. Foster, and these various classes of sinners are under "unavoidable necessity" to sin, and, of course, are no longer blamable! If Arminians would read their Bibles more and

\* Dr. Dick, vol. ii. p. 284.

† Objections, p. 196.

their standard writers less, they would not so often be caught in such inextricable blunders:

2. It is objected, that if "Adam and the holy angels fell from purity, why not regenerated persons?" We answer, the cases are altogether different. The angels and Adam had no promise of a faithful God, that "they should not depart from him," no covenant assurance that they should "never perish." Besides, the standing of believers steadfastly in the faith and practice of the truth, is not in their own strength, but by grace and sufficiency purchased by atoning blood. Their perseverance is therefore firm and assured, even as the perfect "righteousness" of their Substitute and Surety, and infallibly certain as Christ's prayers to be answered. "Because I live, ye shall live also." The continued obedience of Adam had no such firm foundation as this. Thus it is, that "a just man falleth *seven times and riseth up again*,"\* "for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Neither will this take place without the believer's own exertions, in the prayerful and diligent use of the appropriate means of grace. No one holds that "the man may indulge to the utmost excess and yet be safe," any more than the farmer will receive a crop if he do not labor for it, or life will be continued without food. "Final perseverance" is a perseverance in "holiness, and the end everlasting life." Neither is it a lawful inference from this doctrine, that a believer having fallen into sin, if he die impenitent, will be saved; but that no true saint will be suffered thus to die. In the language of Wesley, "he is immortal till his work is done;" and one important part of that *work* is his own preparation for a death of peace and a future life.

3. It is objected that the final fall and perdition of "the righteous" is assumed in Ezek. 18 : 24—"When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, \* \* \* in his sin that he hath sinned, *he shall*

\* Prov. 24 : 16.

*die."* Admitting, for the present, that this refers to that spiritual nature secured in regeneration (which is not certain\*), it is a sufficient reply that there are many similar supposed cases in the Bible, where it is positively certain the things supposed *will never take place*. Thus Levit. 18 : 5—"Ye shall keep my statutes and my judgments, which *if a man do*, he shall live in them." Paul refers to this text (Rom. 10 : 5; Gal. 3 : 12), and interprets it to mean that if a man should obey perfectly the Divine law, he would be justified by works. But does it follow that any ordinary man ever did or ever will perfectly obey the whole law? He answers: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." So also, "though we or an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel, \* \* \* let him be accursed;" may we thence infer that Paul or a holy angel ever will "preach another gospel?" Suppose a minister should say, If an Ethiopian shall change his skin, or a camel go through the eye of a needle, THEN will certain classes of the ungodly be purified and saved; would any person understand him to mean, that the negro ever does or will wash himself white, or a camel pass through the eye of a needle? These hypothetical cases furnish a ready clew to solve many similar difficulties. If believers do not "forgive their enemies," neither will God forgive them; but this by no means proves that a true Christian ever dies cherishing an unforgiving temper. Of the pardoned, God says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." How can this be, if such a soul will have all his sins called into judgment, and he doomed to eternal woe on their account?

4. Heb. 6 : 4-6 speaks of those "who were once enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, were made partakers of the

\* See Deut. 25 : 1—"If there be a controversy between men, and they come into judgment, \* \* \* then the judges shall justify *the righteous* and condemn the wicked." The righteous in this text means a person with a righteous cause, which a *very wicked* man often has before courts of justice. See also parallel passages in 1 Kings 2 : 32; 2 Kings 10 : 9.

Holy Ghost, &c. if they shall fall away, *it is impossible* to renew them again to repentance." This text is supposed to contain a strong argument against our doctrine.

But besides that the case is hypothetical, not asserted as a real occurrence—there is this difficulty in the way of the Arminian interpretation: the class of persons here described cannot be restored to repentance.\* But those who "fall from grace" in Arminian churches, may fall and rise every day, and even every hour! Besides, Paul tells us that he did not apply these admonitory words to those Hebrews to whom he wrote, for he was "*persuaded better things* of them, even things which accompany *salvation.*" Ver. 9. Thus he clearly indicates his belief of the doctrine of their perseverance unto the end, that they might be saved.

5. A fifth objection is founded on Rev. 22:19—"If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this life, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city." To explain this, we should remember that persons are often spoken of in the Bible, according to their *apparent* or *visible* character, rather than their real standing before God. So Christ addresses the twelve disciples—"I say unto you, *my friends,*"—but Judas was not his friend, but *a devil*. And when he promises them "*twelve thrones*" in heaven, he certainly did not include Judas, "*who went to his own place.*" So also when (Matt. 13:12) he says—"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, \* \* \* but whosoever *hath not*, from him shall be taken away even *that which he hath,*"—in the parallel passage, Luke 8:18, it reads, "*even that which he seemeth to have.*" So in *taking*

\* Dr. Clarke admits that there is "*a good sense* in which all these things may be applied to the Jews at large, who were favored by our Lord's ministry and miracles." Of course the reference will then be "to their state, which had received much moral cultivation from Moses, the prophets, Christ and his Apostles, and now bore only pride, unbelief, and hardness of heart," &c. Com. Heb. 6:8. If this be true, the passage does not refer to the apostasy of true believers.

*away* “the part” of the person spoken of, God shall make it manifest that he had “no part or lot in these things”—he shall take from him even that which *he seemed* to have.

6. Another Arminian objection is founded on the very numerous warnings and cautions given to Christians by the inspired writers, “to take heed lest they fall,” “be cast away,” &c. But these are to be viewed as the Divinely appointed means of securing their perseverance. A parallel case is that of Paul’s shipwreck. Acts 27. The angel of God appeared to him and assured him that not a soul should perish of all that were in the ship. This of course insured that result—but it did not make the exertions of the seamen needless. On the contrary when they were about to leave the vessel, Paul said to the centurion, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” Thus the event, though certain, was to be brought about by the proper instrumentality, but not without it. Hezekiah’s life, too, was, by special promise of God, prolonged *fifteen* years—but he was directed to employ the appropriate means for his recovery, nor could he live without food. Just so is it with the certain perseverance of the true believer. These admonitions and other spiritual aids are the *bread* and *water* which support and prolong the health and vigor of his soul, and secure its final salvation.

7. Again we are referred to the grievous falls of some of the most distinguished of God’s people, Noah, David, Solomon and others. We admit that one clear, unequivocal example of a true friend of God, a soul reconciled by faith in Christ, having totally and finally apostatized and perished, would settle the question. But there is *no such case on record*. Christ tells us that “many will prophesy and cast out devils in his name”—but he will say to them, “I NEVER KNEW YOU.” Persons may appear to make great attainments in religion; while it is all a form of godliness without the power—they have no oil of true grace in their lamps. And as regards the deplorable lapses of eminent Christians, if

*they fell, they rose again,* being “kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.”

It is not questioned that the doctrine of final perseverance may be perverted and abused by hypocrites and wicked men. But so may every other doctrine of the Bible. That there is no such tendency in the true statement of our doctrine, whatever may be the result of the misrepresentations of its enemies, is obvious. If in any case it seems to encourage licentious or careless living, we may feel assured it is owing to a perversion of the truth, which implies in its very essence, a perseverance in holiness as of the very nature of perseverance unto salvation. No man has any evidence of conversion, while he chooses to live in the practice of iniquity. The perseverance of such a person is unto everlasting perdition. But in regard to him whose heart God in the exercise of infinite, unmerited goodness, has renewed, even when he was *dead in sin*, what possible motive could he have to forsake such a soul? Is it on account of his sins? The Apostle answers—“If when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be *saved* by his life.” In the language of another, “God will extinguish the sun and the moon, and all the stars; he will burn up the world—but he will first ‘gather together *his elect* from the four corners of heaven.’”\*

But while the doctrine of “saints’ perseverance” may be perverted and abused to licentiousness, the doctrine of “falling from grace” is the natural and legitimate source of much of that instability and uncertainty which mark the conversions of Methodism. Those who have long and carefully studied this subject, with the largest facilities for a correct estimate, assure us that about “*nine-tenths* of the whole are *found to be spurious*, i. e. ‘fall from grace,’ after a longer or shorter

\* Tract on Perseverance, issued by the Congregational Board of Publication. In answering these objections, the author is indebted for a number of suggestions to this source.

trial!" They mention cases where as many as *thirty* persons were received into class, of whom, at the end of the year, only *two* remained—of *forty* said to be converted, every one of whom became backsliders—and of *one hundred and five* counted as converts, *all but two* of whom fell away. Said one of this class of converts, “I have been a member of the church, off and on, seventeen years.” A class-leader of this sort was exhorting his mother “to be born again and become a dear, good Methodist.” She replied, “You have been born again *now ten times*, and I am afraid if you should be converted *ten times more*, you will never get to heaven.”\* The great radical transformation of the soul described by its Author as “a new creation,” a “spiritual resurrection,” “a new life,” is degraded to a process not dissimilar to the putting on and off of a coat! Falling and rising up again is a very simple and easy process. “Sufficient grace” is at hand, and all that is required is “*the mighty exertion*” of the lapsed soul—as Mr. Foster has it. This process may indeed *go so far* that the soul will lose all grace by frequent abuse—but no one imagines that this extremity can ordinarily arrive short of some half dozen, perhaps more, of these *ups and downs* in the religious life! The impression which such facts make upon hundreds of worldly men, as well as upon the supposed converts, is that vital religion is all a sham. “Ministers have told us,” say these converts, “that we had experienced religion; but we have tried it and found it a cheat.” And just as surely as *principles* will to a greater or less extent, mould and influence a man’s conduct, so surely does this doctrinal error of Arminianism tend strongly and necessarily to such results. It is not the *abuse* of a good thing, but the natural and uniform working of a powerful cause producing these disastrous effects, just as disease produces death.

If it were possible to obtain minute statistical information of the state of things in the most prosperous Methodist

\* See Cooke’s Centuries.

churches, the statements would doubtless be fully confirmed. Some years ago, the Rev. G. Coles published in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* the following *exhibit* of the Congregation of Poughkeepsie, N. Y. for two years previous. He says the number of members in his church at first was about four hundred :

Moved away without certificate, and otherwise LOST from the classes,	48
Probationers dropped,	29
Members expelled,	10
Members withdrawn,	5
Total,	92

(1.) Of these ninety-two, be it observed, *forty-eight* either removed without certificate (and thus are *out of the church*, being excluded from other circuits by the Discipline), or are embraced in the mysterious designation, “LOST from the classes!” The remaining forty-four were “dropped” as unpromising, “expelled” as unsavory, or withdrew in disgust. So that, as Mr. Coles himself testifies, notwithstanding the church had received an accession of one hundred and seventy-seven persons from other circuits and on probation, and there had been only eighteen deaths, yet the whole number was LESS by just seventeen, than two years previously, at the commencement of his labors! What a picture is this! One hundred (nearly) separated from the institutions of religion, bearing the mark of disgrace! Nearly *one-fourth* of the whole Methodist host (supposing the *prosperity* of the church to be equally great elsewhere) dismissed under the stigma of ecclesiastical dishonor every two years!

(2.) By the returns in 1836, they reported over six hundred and fifty thousand members, which, by the foregoing calculation, would give upward of one hundred and sixty thousand excommunicants every two years, or more than eighty thousand annually! Is there not reason to fear that the *light* which *so shines* is darkness?

(3.) So also a writer in the *Southern Christian Advocate* for October, 1850 ~~says~~.

"Being allowed to peep into the archives of an old and flourishing church, I have taken, as a basis for the following table, four revivals;" and the writer adds, "I was in every revival myself." He then states: "Of those who joined our church, 204 in number, the following table will show their ultimate destiny:

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Methodists, - - - - -	24	64	88
Backsliders, - - - - -	45	13	58
Presbyterians, - - - - -	2	14	16
Baptists, - - - - -	4	4	8
Episcopalians, - - - - -		1	1
Moved away, - - - - -	3	30	33
			204

The writer then remarks: "Here we have of 171 original members, only 88 remaining and living and dying with us, 58 gone back to the world, and 25 joined other communions Of the 33 who moved away, and were lost sight of, I fear not a moiety ever joined any church, much less remained in ours. So from this showing, not half of the fruits of our revivals are saved to the church."

"The influence of the doctrine of certain perseverance, we are told, is similar to that of Universalism." But it is a well known fact that in whatever district of country Methodist Episcopacy has been left to work out her system apart from the restraints, supports, and other modifying influences of other denominations, especially of Calvinistic bodies, there *infidelity* prevails to a fearful extent, especially among the better educated and more influential classes; and Arminianism produces its legitimate fruits, viz. spiritual lethargy and other premonitory symptoms of death. So also in certain sections where Unitarianism has prevailed, associated as it generally is with Universalism—very rarely have any lost their Calvinism without using Arminianism as a stepping-stone to those worse errors. Ordinarily they have made Arminianism *the half way house* in attaining the *lower deep* of

Socinianism and Universalism. It is the testimony of Rev. Parsons Cooke, pastor of Lynn Congregational church, Mass. that "the Methodist ministry promotes Universalism much faster than a Universalist ministry can," and that "few converts are gained by Universalists, except of those who have gone through a spurious Methodist conversion." Hundreds in many parts of our country will testify that "this witness is true." As to skepticism or infidelity, the Methodist Quarterly Review (for 1848, p. 495) concedes that "Calvinism has no 'direct tendency to such a result,' though it has been charged by Arminian champions with Atheism as a necessary consequence." This is the language of a decided *Arminian*, but of a man of enlightened views—and of course he opposite of Foster on Calvinism.

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## LETTER XI.

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.—IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

REV. SIR—Very intimately associated with the doctrine of Atonement, is that of Justification by the righteousness of Christ—the doctrine, as Luther well called it, of "a rising or falling church."

### V. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIAN METHODISM ON THE SUBJECT OF JUSTIFICATION AND IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

If a man be, as even Arminians maintain, a hopelessly fallen, depraved and ruined creature, "how can he be just with God?" The answer which all enlightened Christians give, is, "by the righteousness, the active and passive obedience of Christ." His "passive obedience," or his sufferings, were necessary to satisfy the *penal* demands of the law, and release the believer from its sentence of condemnation,

tion: his "active obedience" was to meet the requisitions of the same perfect law, viz. "do this and live." To be released from a righteous sentence pronounced by a law which we have broken, is one thing—to be accepted in the Beloved, and treated at the final judgment as having fulfilled all required obedience, is obviously another. Christ owed no life-long obedience to *his own law* for himself, but he rendered it as really as his sufferings and death, in the character of the Surety and Substitute of his people. Thus says Paul, "By the obedience of ONE shall many be made righteous," *i. e.* justified, pardoned and accepted before God.

To illustrate the necessity of this two-fold obedience, look at the case of Adam. Arminians concede that he was under a covenant of works, the terms of which were, "Do this and live." Here was a *righteousness* required. When Adam broke the covenant, this *righteousness* was of course unfulfilled. Suppose the *penalty* of his transgression be remitted, still the demands of the law for active righteousness in order to *life*, remain unsatisfied; man must obey, otherwise he cannot gain the reward of his obedience, viz. *life*. His *sin* may be conceived to be pardoned, but still, though he escapes the *penalty*, he does not possess any title to the *reward* of the covenant, viz. *life*. Thus when Christ, as our Substitute, undertook our case, it was indispensably necessary that he should act in our room and stead, in both these capacities. So he "magnified the law and made it honorable." This "perfect righteousness" is imputed, or reckoned to the account of every true believer, and this is all the *meritorious* obedience he ever has or ever can have.

With this statement agrees Goodwin, quoted and approved by Watson: "If we take the phrase of imputing Christ's righteousness, including his obedience as well *passive* as *active*, in the return of it, *i. e.* in the privileges, blessings and benefits purchased by it; so a believer may be said to be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed, *i. e.* God

justifies a believer for the sake of Christ's righteousness, not for any righteousness of his own."\* In other words, his perfect obedience unto death not only pays the *penalty* of the violated law, but performs the meritorious *conditions* of the broken covenant, "*Do, and live.*" Thus man is not only *pardoned*, but accepted and admitted to favor and friendship, which is a very different thing from mere pardon. The felon may be pardoned by the act of the Executive, but *restoration* to the favor, the good standing and social privileges of the community, must be the *reward* of protracted good behavior, or obedience to the laws of the land. Of the same sort were the two-fold necessities of man's fallen state. And such too was the two-fold character of "the righteousness of Christ" rendered in the room of the guilty, and accounted to them in its benefits and blessings.

In agreement with this scriptural view of Justification, hear Mr. Wesley: "As the *active* and *passive* righteousness of Christ were never in fact separated, so we never need separate them at all." He adds: "It is with regard to both these, *conjointly*, that Jesus is called the 'Lord our righteousness.'" Again: "In what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers? In this—all believers are *forgiven and accepted*, not for the sake of any thing in them, or of any thing that ever was, that is, or ever *can be done* by them, but wholly for the sake of what Christ has *done and suffered* for them."† Thus, in the words of our Catechism, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sin, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight; only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

The great difficulty is, to reconcile these very correct and explicit statements of the grand doctrine of "imputed righteousness," with other statements of a very different sort from Arminian sources. Thus Watson: "It is established by the

\* *Institutos*, vol. ii. p. 225.

† Sermon on "The Lord our Righteousness."

New Testament, that justification, *pardon and remission of sins*, the non-imputation of sin and *the imputation of righteousness*, are phrases of *the same import*.”\* But this not only flatly contradicts the statements before quoted, but is the same as to say, that to pardon the convicted thief and release him from prison, is the same as to *accept* him to all the privileges of honest men, and receive him with all respect in good society! These blessings of pardon and acceptance are always, in the case of the Christian, found conjointly, as Wesley says, but it is obviously proper to consider them in this distinct manner, just as we contemplate the attributes of God separately, in order to aid our feeble comprehension.

Similar inconsistency appears in Mr. Wesley’s views of this great fundamental doctrine. No Calvinist, for example, wishes for more express and clear statements than these: “Christ is termed ‘THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,’ and the plain, indisputable meaning is, He shall be what he is called, the sole *purchaser*, the sole *meritorious cause*, both of our justification and sanctification.” “Christ is the end of the law, \* \* \* the law of works, \* \* \* for righteousness to every one that believeth in him, \* \* \* to the end that, though he *hath not kept and cannot keep* that law, he may be both accounted and made righteous.” Still Mr. W. in the same tract, says: “‘The righteousness of Christ’ is an expression I do not find in the Bible;” but he adds, “when Paul says (Rom. 5 : 18), “By the righteousness of one (in the following verse, ‘the obedience of one, his obedience unto death, his dying for us), does not Paul mean ‘the righteousness of Christ?’” Mr. Wesley answers, “undoubtedly he does!” Still, being altogether *more cautious* than the inspired Apostle, he says: “We are all agreed as to the meaning, but not as to the expression, “the imputing the righteousness of Christ!”† But can any Arminian tell how this phrase differs from his own Article IX.—“We are accounted righteous before God,

\* Institutes, vol. ii. p. 212.

† Doct. Tracts, p. 208.

only for *the merit* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?" Now, how are we to obtain that *merit or righteousness* except by its being *imputed* or reckoned to us? No one can tell.

But Mr. Wesley and his Arminian brethren say they *are afraid* of the phrase, "imputing the righteousness of Christ," because it tends naturally to make Christ *the minister of sin*." This, if it had any rational foundation in truth, would be a most formidable objection. How do they reach such a conclusion? "For," they say, "if *the very personal* obedience (or righteousness) of Christ (as those expressions directly lead me to think), be mine the moment I believe, \* \* \* can my *obeying God* add *any value* to the *perfect* obedience of Christ? On this scheme," they add, "are not the holy and the unholy on the very same footing?" But as they themselves admit this to be only a *dreadful abuse* of the Antinomians, "to justify the grossest abominations,"\* such reasoning will not weigh much with any well instructed Christian, who has been taught to regard this as one of the sweetest forms in which the Spirit of God hath revealed the "righteousness of ONE," that is Christ, "the Lord our righteousness."

And why do Arminians object to the phrase, "imputed righteousness?" They say, it is because their "*obeying God* can *add no value* to Christ's perfect personal righteousness!" Did such a conception ever enter the mind of any true Christian, viz. that he *ought* to wish or desire a kind of *justification* to which he *could* add *VALUE* by his own obedience! Do Arminians mean to say that in regard to an *increase* of the *VALUE* of the perfect obedience of Christ, the "holy and unholy are *not on the very same footing*?" Will Bishop Simpson, and all the other bishops, jointly or severally, inform the Christian world on this topic! Let them tell us how much *value* the obedience of any *holy man* CAN ADD to the perfect obedience of Christ." And whether an *unholy* man has any *less* power to add to *its value*?

\* Doct. Tracts, p. 209.

But whilst no Calvinist could ever have conceived the idea of his own works, or the works of any holy or unholy man, “*adding to the value of Christ’s obedience,*” still “works of righteousness which we have done,” or may do, have a very important and significant relation to the scheme of redemption. When Mr. Wesley quotes our Lord : “*Labor \* \* \* for the meat that endureth to everlasting life,*” Mr. Fletcher, in his first “Check to Antinomianism,” says : “He strikes at a fatal mistake \* \* \* of many *honest* Calvinists, and not a few Arminians who are Calvinists in practice.” This “fatal mistake” he describes thus : “When they see that man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, they *lie easy* in the mire of iniquity, idly waiting till by an irresistible act of omnipotence, God pulls them out without any striving on their part.”

So far as Mr. Fletcher speaks of *Arminians* in this statement, we may admit him to be competent testimony; but all “*honest* Calvinists” will feel that he is “bearing false witness against his neighbors.” They firmly believe and constantly teach, that “good works done in obedience to God’s commandments are the *fruits and evidences* of a true and lively faith; that their ability to perform such works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ, \* \* \* who works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure. Yet are they not hereupon to *grow negligent*, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.”\* These things honest Calvinists do, not to *add value* to the perfect obedience of their Saviour. This they would regard as a species of blasphemy. But believing when they have done all, that they are “unprofitable servants,” they acknowledge their best services “have no merit, but must be accepted only through Christ.”

And strange as it may seem, Mr. Fletcher quotes Wesley

\* Confession of Faith, chap. 16.

in terms of the very same import, as follows : “I always did clearly assert the *total fall* of man and his utter inability to do any good of himself; the *absolute necessity* of the grace and Spirit of God, to raise even a good thought or desire in our hearts; the Lord *rewarding* no works and accepting of none, but so far as *they proceed from his preventing, convincing and converting grace* through the Beloved : the blood and righteousness of Christ being the *sole meritorious cause* of our salvation.” \* There is nothing here that looks like adding to the value of the obedience (or righteousness) of Christ.

Many of the gross misstatements made by Arminians in discussing with Calvinists the merits of Christ and their imputation to believers, arise from their supposing us to teach a transfer of moral character. Thus Dr. Clarke, in commenting on 2 Cor. 5 : 21, “He hath made him to be sin for us,” &c. says : “This text has been made the foundation of a *most blasphemous* doctrine, viz. that our *sins were imputed to Christ*, and that he was a *proper object* of the indignation of Divine justice, because he was *blackened with imputed sin*; \* \* \* that Christ may be considered as *the greatest of sinners*, because all the sins of mankind were imputed to him.” But as no Calvinist supposes that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness gives to the believer *a moral purity* equal to that of the Saviour, so no Calvinist teaches that Christ became *impure*, or was morally *blackened* by “bearing our sins.”

It is not so easy to account for Dr. Clarke’s errors in another parallel instance. In speaking of our Lord’s agony in the garden (Luke 22 : 43, 44), he says : “Some think it was occasioned by the *Divine wrath* pressing in upon him, for as he was bearing the sin of the world, God looked on and treated him as if he were a sinner.” “There is something,” he says, “*very shocking* in this supposition, and yet it is truly

\* First Chock.

astonishing how *general* it is.” If it be replied, that Christ himself complains while hanging on the cross, “Why hast thou (God the Father) *forsaken me?*” Dr. Clarke tries to evade the force of this text, by supposing it merely to mean, “to *what sort of persons* hast thou left me?” Or, “how astonishing the wickedness of those persons into whose hands I have fallen!”

But let us see whether Dr. Clarke himself does not hold to “*the very shocking supposition*” of “the Divine wrath pressing upon our Lord.” On the next page he informs us: “Christ was now suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God: that he was bearing in his body the *punishment due to their sins*, I have no doubt; and that the agony of his mind in these vicarious sufferings caused the bloody sweat,” &c. Now how could our Lord “bear the *punishment due to sin*,” without bearing the “Divine wrath?” Is not God “*angry with the wicked*”—“does he not *hate* all workers of iniquity”—“is not the *wages* of sin death”—and can there be *this curse* of the Divine law and yet no “wrath of God?” So, in commenting on Gen. 3 : 24, “*He drove out the man*,” Dr. C. says: “God’s *displeasure* against *sinful man* is to be noted.” Yet *he rejects* the supposition “that Christ was at all under *the displeasure* of his heavenly Father,” in “bearing the punishment of sin!” And he further says that our Lord endured the “utmost *anguish and grief of soul*,” which were “produced by a supernatural cause” (Com. Matt. 22 : 44); and “that it was an *unprecedented and indescribable agony*” (Matt. 26 : 38); “most overwhelming anguish, the most extreme which the soul can feel; excruciating torture of spirit.” All this was *the punishment* due to sin, yet there was “no displeasure of God?”

So also, when Paul says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the *curse* of the law, being made a *curse* for us,” how could he be under the Divine *curse*, if not under “Divine wrath?” Isaiah, too, declares, “The Lord laid (caused to meet) on

him the iniquity of us all," and Dr. Clarke explains thus : "He was the subject on which all the rays collected on the focal point fell. *These fiery rays,*" he adds, "which should have fallen on all mankind, diverged from Divine Justice \* \* \* and converged on him. So the Lord caused to meet on him *the punishment* due to the iniquities of all." Now if this do not amount to "the *Divine wrath* pressing upon" the glorious Sufferer, what terms would convey that meaning ? We cannot even *plausibly* account for these strange contradictions of Dr. Clarke, except on the supposition that he thought he was combating what he regards as the *Calvinistic* idea of a transfer of moral character ; *i. e.* that Christ was personally *defiled*, or made personally *impure*, by the imputation of man's sin ! This absurdity has been often charged, but never proved against Calvinists. Here New School Presbyterians and Methodists make common cause in their assaults upon our doctrines.

By what authority then do Fletcher and other Arminians charge the Calvinistic doctrine of imputed righteousness with encouraging men "to lie easy in the mire of iniquity?" Nothing but the grossest *abuse* of our views and perversion of their obvious import, could lead to such a result. "Faith receives and rests on Christ and his righteousness, and is the alone instrument of justification." But it is immediately added : "It is not *alone* in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love." \* Of course, if any one finds *his faith* inducing him to "lie easy *in the mire* of iniquity," he thus demonstrates that he has no true and living faith, but is a *self-deceiver*. And just so far as any genuine believer ever realized such indulgence to sin in his life, he proves himself "a backslider in heart," and obscures any evidence he may ever have possessed that he is "born of God." In such circumstances, his confidence in his good estate is mere pre-

\* Confession, chap. 11.

sumption—a dangerous delusion. Nor does it follow that God regards such backsliders (say David) as “all fair and undefiled,” while they wallow in the adulterer’s mire and the murderer’s gore.”\* On the contrary, the Scriptures expressly teach, that the Divine *displeasure* was kindled against David, on more than one such occasion; nor were his crimes less hateful in the sight of Infinite Purity, because committed by a justified person; but rather much more abominable.

But when we inquire whether David, by those crimes, ceased to have any interest in the *justifying grace* of God—whether *all his sins* which had been pardoned, were again laid to his charge, and his Saviour’s merits, sufferings, righteousness and intercession no longer availed for him before the throne—in a word, whether he ceased to be a regenerate person, and became “a child of the devil,” until he was again “born of the Spirit,” &c. the question is one that must be decided on different grounds. Calvinists believe, that though God “visited his iniquity with stripes and his transgressions with the rod, yet his *loving kindness* did he not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail.” Psalm 89:33. We admit that if David had died with those dreadful crimes unrepented of, he must have perished—but the same “loving kindness” made such a result impossible, prolonged his life and brought him to repentance, and reconciliation with God. And all this, without *the shadow of merit* on the part of the guilty king.

Nor is the error of Fletcher less obvious to Calvinists in such passages as the following: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works (*i. e.* your *filthy rags and dung*). “We are created in Christ Jesus to good works,” *i. e.* to *filthy rags*. “Provoke one another to love and good works,” *i. e.* to dross and filthy rags, &c. &c. But the extreme weakness and folly of this sort of argument is too plain to need any extended exposure. If “good works” be

\* Fletcher’s Fourth Check.

viewed merely as the *meritorious ground* of pardon and justification, every Calvinist will cheerfully adopt such statements as his own. In this sense they are nothing but “filthy rags.” But as the gracious “*fruits of the Spirit*,” the evidences of the new birth, and the ornaments of the Christian life, good works cannot be too highly prized nor too diligently cultivated. To take the place of Christ’s merits, or to supply any supposed deficiency therein, every Christian will esteem his own virtues as “dung,” “dross,” “filthy rags.” And this view is adopted by both Wesley and Fletcher, *viz.* “that the blood and righteousness of Christ are THE SOLE MERITORIOUS CAUSE of our salvation.”\* Thus the blow by which Fletcher aimed to overturn Calvinism, recoils upon himself, demolishes his own system !

It is difficult, moreover, to harmonize such extracts as that last given, with other expressions from the same source. Thus in the Minutes of Conference in 1770, Mr. Wesley writes as follows on the subject of “*merit* and good works:” “As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so *dreadfully afraid*: we are rewarded *according to our works*; yea, *because of our works*. How does this differ from ‘*for the sake of our works?*’ And how differs this from secundum merita operum—as *OUR WORKS DESERVE!* Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.” But this is unmitigated Arminianism, or rather Pelagianism.

What were Mr. Wesley’s precise views of the nature of Christ’s active obedience or righteousness in behalf of the sinner, is not apparent. In the first volume of his miscellaneous works, when as yet we may suppose he had not matured his system, he speaks of Christ’s “satisfaction of God’s justice, by the offering his body, &c. and fulfilling the law of God perfectly.” And again: “Christ therefore is now the righteousness of all them that truly believe. He paid for them the ransom by his death. He for them *fulfilled the law*

\* First Check, p. 19.

in his life. So that now in him, every believer may be called *a fulfiller of the law.*" By such language as this, when we compare it with other statements from the same pen, we are at a loss to know what is intended. For example, when we open the third volume of his miscellaneous works, we find him replying to Mr. Hervey in the following manner: "If he was our substitute as to penal suffering," remarks Hervey, "why not as to justifying obedience?" "The former," answers Wesley, "is expressly asserted in Scripture. The latter is not," &c. Here he admits a kind of substitution as to penal sufferings, very much in the same manner that some New School men speak of Christ as our substitute; that is, his sufferings were a substitute for the execution of the legal penalty; a display for governmental purposes; an opening of the way of pardon and acceptance; according to which, as Wesley asserts it, "we are rewarded as our works deserve." That this is his meaning, appears as follows: Mr. Hervey remarks, "In order to entitle us to a reward, there must be an imputation of Christ's righteousness." Wesley replies, "There must be an interest in Christ. And then every man *shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.*" Mr. Hervey introduces an objector as saying, "If Christ's perfect obedience be ours, we have no more need of pardon than Christ himself"—a stale quibble, as old at least, as Socinus, the father of Unitarianism. To which Wesley replies, "The consequence is good. You have started an objection which you cannot answer!" "Both the branches of the law," says Mr. Hervey, "the *preceptive* and the *penal*, in the case of guilt contracted, must be satisfied." "Not so," replies Wesley. "Christ, by his *death alone*, fully satisfied for the sins of the whole world." "The cure of sin," says Hervey, "will be perfected in heaven." "Nay, surely," adds Wesley, "in *paradise*, if not sooner!" Is this the doctrine of an Arminian *purgatory*, "to cure sin?" What else can it mean? This interpretation is confirmed by what follows: "This

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\* First Check, p. 10.

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freedom from sin," adds Hervey, "is a noble prerogative of the beatific vision." "No," replies Wesley, "it would then come too late. If sin remains in us till the day of judgment, it will remain forever." Sin, it seems, may remain in us till we get to paradise [or purgatory], but no longer: then, "if not sooner," it must be *cured!* A good old Popish way of salvation, which might have been traveled to heaven safely, for aught that appears, without any atonement.

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## LETTER XII.

### SINLESS PERFECTION.

REV. SIR—The discussion of what you are pleased to call "Christian Perfection," *i. e.* the entire freedom of many Christians from all sin, in thought, word and deed, for years prior to the great change of death, introduces some of the more practical features of your scheme of religion.

Wesley, it is worthy to be premised, traces this unscriptural sentiment as far back at least as Pelagius, in the fourth century. "I verily believe," he says, "the real heresy of Pelagius was neither more nor less than this, the holding that Christians may, by the grace of God, go on to perfection." And lest such suspicious ancestry should bring the doctrine into disrepute, he adds of Pelagius, "I would not affirm that he was not one of the holiest men of the age." \*

But Mr. Wesley might have commenced the genealogy of Perfectionism at a much earlier period. "In most of the false religions of the world, the doctrine of human perfection,

\* Of Pelagius we learn from the best authorities that he "denied original sin, maintained man's plenary ability, the moral purity of infants, justification by our own righteousness," with some other unscriptural tenets. And yet of this heretic, Wesley says, "I guess he was both a *wise and a holy man.*" "A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind." Serm. vol. ii. p. 323. Misc. Works, vol. iii. p. 259.

manifested in some favored instances, has, if we mistake not, formed an essential article of belief. A kind of perfection has been claimed for Greek and Roman sages, for Hindoo devotees and for Mohammedan saints. Pantheism, the philosophical basis of most of the popular systems of idolatry, assumes as a fundamental position, *such a union of man to the Deity* as constitutes the leading principle of modern Perfectionism. This Pantheism is supposed by many to date farther back than the universal deluge. The Gnostics of primitive times, the New Platonists of Egypt, the brethren and sisters of the Free Spirit at a later day, the primitive Quakers, the French Prophets, the Shakers, and all the great body of the Mystics, were all strenuous advocates of Perfectionism.\* Let us inquire into the theological relations of this distinguishing characteristic of so many forms of both ancient and modern error.

## VI. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIAN METHODISM, IN REFERENCE TO “SINLESS PERFECTION.”

We shall be met at the threshold of this discussion with a stout denial that this is a doctrinal feature of modern Methodism. It is a matter both of surprise and regret, that the advocates of the system should seem to expose themselves to the charge of a want of candor in the occasional debates which take place upon this question. Would it ever be imagined by an honest, upright, conscientious man, that when it is so often and so vehemently denied that Methodists maintain the doctrine of “Sinless Perfection,” all that is meant is, that they reject the phraseology, *the words*, not that they do not hold and teach the sentiment? Yet that this is the simple verity, is proved by a reference to their standard authors. Thus: “We are all agreed that we may be saved from *all sin* before death; *i. e.* from all sinful tempers and desires.” “Grown Christians are in such a sense

\* Biblical Repertory, July, 1842.

perfect as to be freed from *evil tempers and desires*. Every one of these can say, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, &c.; words that manifestly describe *a deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin.*" Doct. Tracts, pp. 293, 296. These extracts are made from a volume which, as we are told in the advertisement, was originally bound and published with the Form of Discipline, and is now "stereotyped," for the benefit of the church. Many parallel passages might be added, from the sermons of Wesley and others, but these will enable us to understand what is meant when "sinless perfection" is disclaimed with so much vehemence.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Wesley, as Whitefield tells us, "thought meanly of Abraham, though eminently 'the friend of God,' and of David, the man after God's own heart." Much less that he affirmed, as we learn from the same testimony, "that no Baptist or Presbyterian writer he had ever read, *knew any thing* of the liberties of Christ!" "What," replies Whitefield, "neither Bunyan, Henry, Flavel, Halyburton, nor any of the New England and Scotch divines? See, my dear sir," adds Whitefield, "what narrow-spiritedness and want of charity arise from your principles. Do not, henceforth, say aught against election, as destructive of meekness and love."

Perhaps no publication (if we except the writings of the first apostle of Methodism,) is more popular among modern Arminians, than the labored and superficial work of Fletcher, which he entitles, "Checks to Antinomianism;" the object of which is to cry down Calvinism by an unpopular epithet. It is a fact, strictly analogous to past experience of human weakness and fallibility, that those who urge this unfounded charge of Antinomian tendencies, are themselves most guilty. This truth is aptly illustrated in the doctrine under review. It is not that these perfectionists imagine they live without transgressing the "moral law," but they regard it as no longer in force. Christians are not *under law*, but *under grace*;

under a milder code of legislative requirement than the Decalogue ; a form of obligation suited to man's impaired ability ; brought down to his capacity as a fallen creature, and to which he may and can yield a *perfect* obedience, and is therefore *sinlessly perfect*. Hear upon this topic the standards of Methodism : \* “ *Christ is the end of the law*—1. The Mosaic law. 2. The Adamic law, called the *law of works*,” which required that man should use to the glory of God all the powers with which he was created, and which “ was proportioned to his original powers, and required that he should always think, speak and act precisely right, in every point whatever.” “ He was well able to do so, and God could not but require the service he was able to pay.” Then what follows? Why, “ Adam fell ;” and in consequence, “ no man is able to perform the service which the Adamic law requires.” And now for the conclusion : “ And no man is *obliged* to perform it. God doth not require it of any man. Christ is the end of the Adamic as well as the Mosaic law. By his death he put an end to both. He hath *abolished* both the one and the other, with regard to man ; and the obligation to observe either the one or the other is vanished away. Nor is any man living bound to observe the Adamic more than the Mosaic law.” This, I should suppose, is Antinomianism of sufficient “ proof ” to suit the appetite of the grossest devotee of sensuality. This is the modern method of perfection—not by ascending the steep of moral obligation, but by bringing the requirements of the Divine law down to a level with the sinner’s convenience !

But as if to render the doctrine absurd as well as licentious, Mr. Wesley tells us that “ faith working or animated by love is *all that God now requires* of man, and that he has *substituted* (not sincerity) but *love* in the room of angelic (and Adamic) perfection.” “ This love,” he adds, “ is the loving the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength,

\* Doct. Tracts, pp. 330, 332.

and our neighbor as ourselves, *i. e.* every man as our own souls.”\* But this is entirely up to the standard of both angelic and Adamic perfection.

So also in his “Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” he defines it, “the loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies (he says,) that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love.” But what more than this does the moral law require? Could Adam before his fall do *more* than this? Can saints and angels in heaven?† Yet he admits that a perfect Christian is not freed from “infirmities, ignorance, and mistake;” but “where every word and action springs from love, *a mistake* is not properly sin.” Still he further assures us, these *sinless mistakes* “need the atoning blood.” Such is a fair specimen of the jargon everywhere current among the followers of this great Arminian!

Be it remembered, therefore, that although “no man living is obliged to observe” the moral law, yet “Christian perfection” surpasses the limits of moral obligation, and performs works of supererogation, *more* than can righteously be demanded. Every perfect Methodist “loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength,” and “all his thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love;” and nothing more was ever required by the “moral law.”

But that we may more fully comprehend the mysteries of this singular subject, let us dwell a few moments further upon its theological relations. Mr. Fletcher (after Wesley,) admits that the most advanced Christian falls short, in this life, of the obedience required by the moral or Adamic law, which he calls “the Creator’s *anti-evangelical*, paradisaical law of innocence,” and which he thinks has been abolished.

\* Doct. Tracts, p. 333.

† Wesley himself affirms—“The loving God with all the heart,” “is the most exalted height of man or angel.” Misc. Works, vol. i. p. 228.

Instead of that original constitution, he hold Eccles. 7:20. law, adapted to our state and circumstances”—“Kings 8:46. *cal* mediatorial law of our Redeemer.” (See last *Check*, it is by this milder law that Christians are tried, and by <sup>him</sup> they are correctly considered “perfect;” that is, as having yielded *complete obedience* to the only law which now requires their respect and submission.

Now, without pausing particularly to inquire what is the precise meaning of a “*milder law* ;” that is, a law *less strict*, less perfect, less like God, than the one which we know was “holy, just, and good ;” without too nicely inquiring, whether this new law is less holy, less just, and less good ; whether the nature of moral good and evil is changed, so that this new law of God will not condemn *all sin* ; whether the moral law be indeed “anti-evangelical,” “against the promises of God” (Gal. 3:21); and lastly, *where* this milder law is revealed in the New Testament, by Him who said, “I am come *not to destroy the law* ;” or by him who inquires, “Do we make void the law through faith ? God forbid !”—or by him who asserts, “Sin is the transgression of *the law*”—not “of a *Divine law*,” as Mr. Fletcher has it. Passing all these, let us examine narrowly the logical consistency of the very ground-work of the scheme. Man, they tell us, became by his fall morally unable to render the obedience required by the moral law, and “God does not require it of any man ;” but in infinite *grace*, has placed us under “the new evangelical law of our Redeemer,” which we are morally able to obey, and are *bound* to respect in thought, word and deed. It was the great work which was given Christ to do, to make a “perfect satisfaction” for our “original sin,” to introduce *a milder law*, and apply the merits of his blood to atone for our deficiencies and shortcomings of obedience to the *evangelical law*, which deficiencies do “need the atoning blood,” even in our estate of sinless perfection.

What a rope of sand have we here ! In the *first place*,

sal prayer taught by our Lord himself, in which, whilst we are instructed to say, “Give us *this day our daily bread*,” we are required, with no less frequency, to implore forgiveness of our “*trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” There would be one who could say, I have no sin daily committed, why should I supplicate daily forgiveness? Thus is the commandment of the Most High God made of none effect by the traditions of men.

And what is even more revolting to every Christian feeling—if the wise king of Israel were now on earth, and should utter that humble acknowledgment, “There is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not,” many a Methodist would start from his seat to correct his error, and erase the line from the records of Inspiration. Yes! whatever Solomon may have thought, there are *now* just men on earth who can kneel in the presence of God, and thank him that *they* love him as fervently and constantly as they *ought*, and obey him as perfectly as they ought; and this, too, in direct defiance of their own Article, which asserts that “good works cannot endure the severity of God’s judgment.” Art. 10. We had been accustomed to think that such were the “height, and depth, and length, and breadth,” of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, and such the imperfections and corruptions of the body of this death, that no mortal man would return to the Saviour a love as strong, and constant, and fervent as he *ought*; but it seems we labored under a mistake. We had forgotten those perfect Christians, who had they lived in the days of Isaiah, when as yet the prophecy was not sealed up, must, for the credit of Divine truth, have proposed an amendment in the 64th chapter: “*We are all* as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags—*excepting a few very good people called Methodists.*”

But in reply to the numerous express declarations of the writers of the Old Testament in opposition to this doctrine,

Wesley affirms that “they lived under a dispensation greatly inferior to the Christian, and that nothing can be argued from their confessions of universal sin. Christ, too, tells us, Matt. 11 : 11, “Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is *least* in the kingdom of heaven (viz. the gospel dispensation) is greater than he.” This passage he interprets as referring to a degree of personal holiness greater than belonged to any of the ancient people of God. But could it have been really the opinion of Mr. W. that “*the least*” or feeblest and most imperfect Christian in gospel times, is a more holy and heavenly-minded person than were David, and Job, and Isaiah? Will any sensible Methodist avow such a sentiment? Dr. Clarke, in his note on the passage, says, “that it is not in holiness or devotedness to God, that the least in the kingdom is greater than John, but that it is merely in the difference of the ministry.” The testimony of this distinguished Methodist is true.

Nor do these great leaders of the Methodist host harmonize much better in their views of James 3 : 2, “If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man.” Wesley quotes this text to prove the doctrine of “Christian Perfection.” But Dr. Clarke says, “the words, *perfect man*, mean a man *fully instructed in Divine things*—an adult Christian—one thoroughly instructed in the *doctrines* of the gospel.” And to show conclusively how absurd it is to employ this text in proof of “Christian Perfection,” Dr. C. adds, “how a man’s cautiousness in *what he says* can be a proof that he has *every passion and appetite under control*, I cannot see.” According to this, a man may indulge all the bad passions *in his heart*; if he can only manage to conceal them, and not offend in word, he is a *perfect Christian*!

Dr. Clarke and Mr. Wesley, however, unite their forces when they come to parry the point of the argument drawn from James 3 : 2. The substance of what they have to say is,

"that this text proves nothing against sinless perfection, although the Apostle does assert, '*in many things we offend all*;' for if the Apostle includes himself in the pronoun *we*, he must also include himself, when, speaking of the tongue, he says, 'Therewith bless *we* God, and therewith curse *we* men.' We cannot suppose James was guilty of cursing." But a little attention will show the futility of this reasoning. In the first passage, James says, "we offend *all*," or, *we all* offend—are guilty of breaking God's law "*in many things*." But James does not say, "With the tongue *we all* bless God, and *we all* curse men." Every one familiar with the common forms of speech, knows that the pronoun *we* is often employed to denote a general prevalence of any thing, or a prevailing tendency or liability, among men. But could the truth-speaking God have said, that "*we all* sin in many things," if it were true, that *many men do not sin* in any thing? "If *we*," says the last of the Apostles, "if we say we have no sin, we *deceive* ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

We have thus aimed to state fairly and in the language of its friends, this dogma of Arminianism, and to adduce some of the more obvious scriptural arguments which overthrow it. But as few doctrines are equally in favor with Methodists, let us examine a little more particularly its scriptural foundations. Every argument thus drawn from the armory of inspired truth, will be "*a difficulty*" in the way of the system.

1. There is great reason to fear that the existence of such a dogma among the members of any sect, is a sad evidence of *self-deception*. In his tract on "Christian Perfection," instead of cautioning his followers against the perils of "*a deceived heart*," Mr. Wesley rather encourages them to think themselves "*to be something when they are nothing*." Speaking of one of those "*who fancy* they have attained (to perfection) when they have not," he says, "but he is de-

ceived. What then? It is a *harmless mistake*, while he feels nothing but love in his heart. It is a mistake which generally argues GREAT GRACE, a *high degree* both of *holiness* and happiness." In other words, this "*sinless mistake*," which "needs the atoning blood" to cleanse its filthiness, is an evidence of superior attainments in religion! It need scarcely be said, that in the experience of such men as Paul, Edwards, Payson, Brainerd and others, the holiest men of modern and ancient times, no such *pretension* ever appears. Paul indeed thought "himself alive without the law once;" "but when the commandment came," when enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he was enabled to understand how exceeding *broad*, spiritual and perfect were its requirements; then "he died," *i. e.* died unto all hope of fulfilling the demands of the law, or satisfying Divine justice—then he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

Read, too, the diaries of Edwards and others, whom all admit to have been preëminent in holiness. And "in turning over their pages, you will find that, as the piety of the individual rises, his sense of remaining sin becomes deeper and more afflicting. The seasons of his closest communion with God, are the seasons in which he sees most in himself to be repented of and subdued. The nearer he comes to the throne, the lower he lies in confession and self-abasement. It is not when he hears of God by the hearing of the ear, but when his eye seeth him, that he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. In short, it is when his devotion burns with the brightest and purest flame, that he has the clearest insight into the depravity of his own nature: so that, while he is sensible of an increase of grace, he is equally sensible that more grace is still needed to carry on and complete his deliverance from sin." \*

2. A second argument is derived from the examples and

\* Dr. Snodgrass.

confessions of the most distinguished saints of patriarchal and apostolic times. The intoxication of Noah, the dissimulation of Abraham, the distrust of Jacob, the criminal rashness of Moses—not to speak of the humiliating crimes of David and Solomon, the imperfections of Job and Jeremiah, of Eli, Samuel, Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah—all are “ensamples” for our warning. Nor was the case different with Peter, who, as Paul says, “was to be blamed”—and therefore he “withstood him to his face.” James, too, and John seem to have felt the spirit of *revenge*, and would have called “fire from heaven” to execute their wrath upon the Samaritans.

And so with their confessions. “Mine iniquities have gone over my head, they are too heavy for me.” “Who can understand his errors; cleanse thou me from *secret faults*”—intimating that there *are none*, not even Christians, without such faults to be cleansed. “Behold, I am vile,” says Job, and Nehemiah and Daniel include themselves in their confessions of the sins of Israel.

3. The Scriptures speak of a *spiritual warfare* in the best men, and which is inconsistent with the doctrine of perfection. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit is against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye *cannot* do the things that ye would.” In like manner in Rom. 7 the Apostle depicts in most striking terms this great contest on the battle-field of man’s heart. Arminians pretend that he is describing the struggles of the unregenerate—but could any such truly say, “*I delight in the law of God after the inward man?*” It is an attainment of the good man, that “his delight is in the law of the Lord.” “Oh, how love I thy law.” And Paul’s strong sense of in-dwelling sin extorts the confession—“I am carnal, sold under sin.”

4. But says Wesley, “Ezekiel (chap. 36: 25–29 has a promise, than which none can be more clear: ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean; from all

your idols and from all your filthiness will I cleanse you : I will also save you from all your uncleanness.' So also John : 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil ;' and 'Christ gave himself for the church, \* \* \* that she might not have spot or wrinkle or any such thing.' \*\* But if these and scores of similar texts prove anything on the subject, they prove *far too much*. They prove that *all Israel* are "cleansed from idols and filthiness," and the whole church "saved from uncleanness!" But no Arminian is prepared for such a sentiment. The plain and obvious meaning of such passages is, that sanctification is one of the great and precious blessings of the "New Covenant"—and that to every believer is secured a *perfect* deliverance from the power and pollution of sin. The *time* when these promises are to be fulfilled, is quite another question, and is left unsettled.

5. The doctrine of entire or "Sinless Perfection" is disproved by the *prayers* of inspired men. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." "The Lord fills the poor with good things, but the rich (those who say they *are* 'rich and increased with goods') he sends empty away." Such *rich* ones only prove that they "are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." The true Christian, on the contrary, is deeply sensible of his imperfections even in his holy things, and "his continual suit to God," the judicious Hooker says, is "that he would bear with our infirmities and pardon our offenses."

6. The sixth argument against perfection in this life, is founded on that large class of texts which teaches that perfect conformity to God is to be the peculiar reward of a future existence. "I shall *be satisfied* when I awake in thy likeness"—"when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Why are "the spirits of *just men*

\*Doct. Tracts, p. 305.

*made perfect*" said to constitute the citizens of that sinless country, if many of them are made *perfect* before they enter the tomb?

7. The same result is reached, when we consider the *discipline* and *afflictions* to which the best of God's people are subject. He thus utters the voice of his providence : "Arise ye, for this is not your rest, for it is polluted." "When God with rebuke corrects man for iniquity, he makes his beauty to consume away like a moth." "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth *every son* whom he receiveth." "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." "He chastens us for our profit, that we might be *partakers of his holiness*." But if in any case this object is already attained, why are they still made to suffer? No wise and merciful parent ever inflicts needless pain on his own children.

And who can doubt that the fact, as thus stated, is a fair representation of what occurs in the life of every Christian, up to the moment of his release from the body? For where is the "son" to be found whom the father "chasteneth not," and whom he does not continue to chasten as long as he lives? We have never seen him, in our day; nor is there any allusion to him in the records of the past. "We, that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened"—"we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan *within ourselves*." All believers, without regard to the degree of their sanctification, are thus affected. They groan under the pressure, which is still upon them in the trial of their faith. "Our light affliction," is a phrase which they have frequent occasion to pronounce; "the sufferings of this present time," are things with which they have a daily and an intimate acquaintance.

Here, then, is a chain of truths, inseparably connected; and, by necessity, leading to the conclusion, that there is no sinless perfection in the present world. All Christians are subjected, while here, to chastisements; all chastisements

are from the hand of God; the only present object which God has in view, in chastising his people, is to make them more holy; he cannot be supposed to chastise them "willingly," or without a reason; and hence it follows, that none of their number are so holy as to be beyond the necessity of a still higher degree of sanctification. The argument is perfect, and the conclusion so legitimate, that it would seem impossible for a candid mind to evade it, or be insensible to its force.\*

8. It is no small presumption against Perfectionism, that most of its arguments are scarcely even plausible. Thus says Wesley: "God *commands* us to be perfect, as our Father is perfect." But the same God prohibits *all sin* in mankind. Does it thence follow that some men pass through a long life *without sin?* Again we are told, "that provision is made in the gospel for the attainment of perfection." No doubt of it. So provision is made for deliverance from pain, sickness and sorrow. The question is, *when* will this take place? So also, many of their favorite proof texts belong to justification, not to sanctification. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." This refers to *the pardon* of sin—for not the atonement, but the Spirit of Christ by a direct influence, cleanseth the soul. It is true, the death of Christ is the ransom-price; but the text is more naturally interpreted, of the Divine agency. Besides, the *time* when this cleansing is done, even supposing it to refer to holiness, is left undecided. So when John says: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed (the seed of grace) remaineth in him, and *he cannot sin*, because he is born of God." Now if this prove *perfection*, it proves it of *all* "who are born of God," *i. e.* all Christians. But Arminians themselves admit this to be not true. Besides, it proves the certain perseverance of all the regenerated—"his seed *remaineth* in them." Further, John himself (ch. 1:8) says, "If we say we have

\* Dr. Snodgrass, pp. 72, 73.

no sin, we deceive ourselves, and *the truth is not in us*," i. e. we are "*destitute of the truth*," "*are liars, and the truth is not in us*," as John explains himself in his second chapter. If then we say, "*we have no sin*," we are no Christians. Such is the decision of Inspiration.

What then does the Holy Spirit mean by the phrases, "*doth not commit sin*," "*cannot sin?*" Dr. Clarke, as a matter of course, finds his favorite *perfection* in this as in scores of similar texts, and lifts up a warning voice against those "*who plead for Baal!*" But whether he means that *every one* "*born of God*" is "*saved from all sin in this life*,"\* he does not inform us. Dr. Scott, wisely and in harmony with the Scriptures, interprets these phrases to refer to "*living in the commission of allowed sin*," and as teaching that it is *impossible* for any true believer "*to sin with allowance, continuance and satisfaction*." To "*commit sin*" and to "*do righteousness*," both refer to the *habit* of life, not to individual acts. Of course they affirm nothing about "*sinless perfection*."

9. The testimony of church history is no less strongly in opposition to the dogma of Sinless Perfection. From the days of Augustine in the fourth century, down to John Wesley of the eighteenth, who have been the advocates of this unscriptural notion? It has been confined to Pelagius and a few heretical sects, small in numbers and influence, and whose very names have always been *a stench in the nostrils* of the true church. To these must be added the great anti-christian apostasy of Rome. Her doctrine of *Supererogation* is only *Perfectionism run mad!* The favored children of this "*mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*," are not only *perfect* in all obedience required by the law, but perform a large amount of righteousness *over and above* their *duty*! Of this *treasury* of merit, the Pope holds the infallible key, and distributes to all who are in arrears to Divine justice!

\* Com. on 1 John 3:8.

And how stands this matter now? What evangelical church besides Arminian Methodism, shows any leaning toward this *sinless* dogma? The Lutheran body, as well as several of the minor Baptist sects, are decided *Arminians*; but here they agree with Calvinists. With the suspicious exceptions before stated, the followers of Wesley *stand alone*. Finney, Mahan and a few other Congregationalists of the Pelagian stamp, have gone over to their party—but with almost no exception, the true church of Christ in her various branches, pronounces Arminian *Perfectionism* a novelty among believers and a blotch upon the purity of Apostolic doctrine. In holding and zealously teaching this strange dogma, Methodism virtually charges the universal church with dangerous error. “Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the people”—but in the Arminian Goshen, “light is in all their dwellings!”

10. The *fruits* of Perfectionism, though checked in their full development by the admixture of much precious truth, have not unfrequently been of “the vine of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah.” It led Wesley, as before stated, to regard *self-deception* as an evidence of “great grace!” He himself tells us that in his day “some had left off searching the Scriptures,” alleging that “God writes all the Scripture on our hearts; therefore we have no need to read it.”\* And he finds it needful to warn his followers “that some were wanting in gentleness, goodness, fidelity, *a nice regard to truth*, meekness, temperance. They did not receive reproof with gentleness—were not able to bear contradiction, without the appearance of *resentment*.” “They answer with angry tone, in a sharp or surly manner.” He also cautions them against “enthusiasm,” “Antinomianism,” “self-indulgence,” “sins of omission,” “schism,” “the love of some was hardly *without dissimulation*. Something like *guile* was found in their mouth.” And on pages 68, 69 of the Book of Discipline, we read—“The world says, ‘*The Methodists are no*

\* Doct. Tracts, p. 353.

*better than other people.*' This is NOT TRUE in the general." ("God, I thank thee," said the self-righteous Pharisee, "that I am not as other men.") After thus publishing their superior goodness, we are naturally led to expect from the same source, a very exalted character of that piety which is so much better than that of all the world besides. A few lines below, on the same page, we read—"How little faith is there among us! How much love of the world! Desire of pleasure, of ease, of *getting money.*" "What continual judging one another! What gossiping, *evil speaking*, tale-bearing! **WHAT WANT OF MORAL HONESTY!!!**"

A still more unfavorable estimate is found in Wesley's "Sermon on the inefficacy of Christianity." He lays down three rules:—"Gain all you can." "Save all you can." "Give all you can." He admits "that many observe the first rule, and a few the second; but adds that he had "no reason to believe that *five hundred in fifty thousand* Methodists observed the third rule." Yet he affirms "*nothing can be more plain*" than that all these last are "*twofold more the children of hell* than ever they were before!" By his own estimate, therefore, a large proportion of his followers were *twice as wicked* as before their conversion! These, be it remembered, are their own estimates of the fruits of a system which they call "Scriptural Christianity;" and that, too, in its virgin vigor and efficiency. When such authors as Mr. Foster and Bishop Simpson exhibit Calvinism as "productive of recklessness, licentiousness and crime as its legitimate offspring," &c.\* would it not be worth their while *to look at home?* "The tree is known by its fruits."

But not only had "some" of these early Methodists *left off* "searching the Scriptures," but they had to be warned against supposing "dreams, voices, impressions, visions or revelations, to be from God," "imagining they had the gift of prophesying and discerning spirits," "thinking that because

\* Objections, &c. p. 213, &c.

they were filled with *love*, they did not need so much holiness!" And what is this but infidelity in disguise, substituting the illapses and movings of the Spirit, as they suppose, in the room of the teachings of revelation. This is substantially Quakerism and Shakerism, or at least tends strongly in that direction.

11. Those are widely mistaken who suppose that the perfectionist dogma is a harmless mistake, or even *good* in some of its tendencies. If the views entertained of practical religion by all our wisest and holiest men, are worth anything, then Perfectionism is based upon gross error, and is a most dangerous delusion. It virtually explains away or repeals God's holy and unchangeable law. "The idea," says the late Dr. Archibald Alexander, "of bringing down the law to adapt it to the ability of fallen man, is absurd; for on that principle the more any man is under the dominion of sin, the less will the law require of him. This principle would go far to nullify the law altogether." Again: "*If we are true Christians*, we do now possess such a spiritual knowledge of the law, that we are *daily convinced of our want* of conformity to it, and do see and feel something of the odious nature of the sin which dwells within us." Hence it follows, if we do not feel daily this sinfulness, it *proves* that we are *not* "true Christians."

Again says the venerable Dr. A. Alexander, "The *conviction of sin increases* in the mind of the *true believer*, in proportion to his growth in grace. The more eminent any man is in piety, *the deeper* will be his sense of the *inward defilement of sin* and the greater his self-abhorrence." In other words, the more spiritual light is poured into his soul, the more clearly does he discover the filth and abomination of his depraved nature, as yet only partially sanctified. But if this be true religion, Wesley and his followers are egregiously mistaken—for their doctrine is, "that *grown Christians* see themselves to be free from all sin, both outward and inward."

Hear the venerable Alexander once more: "They who dream of a perfection in this life, which leads them to think they are free from all sin, evidently have not the same kind of religion as the patriarch Job, 'a perfect and upright man.' Such are evidently ignorant of the purity and spirituality of the Divine law; or ignorant of the true state of their own hearts." "There is no better evidence of an enlightened and renewed heart, than just views and feelings in regard to our own sins. It seems, at first view, wonderful that any person should be so blinded as to think that he has no sin. But there are many blinding influences—'the heart is deceitful above all things.' Nothing is more efficient than spiritual pride."\*

Once more: "In regard to a large part of sinful acts or omissions, most men remain ignorant of them, because they know not the extent and spirituality of the law; especially in regard to the affections and purposes of the heart, in which sin has its origin and its essence." "Souls under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, are led to see that their chief disease is one of the heart; and before God they mourn daily over their want of holy feelings and emotions, and the many evils which they, by the application of the law, detect in themselves. Thus they are convinced that the heart itself, which generates such sinful thoughts, must be desperately wicked. "The great business of the Christian is to oppose and mortify these corruptions, which remain after conversion. Hence there must be a perpetual conflict between the flesh and the spirit, between the old man and the new." †

\* See "Practical Sermons," pp. 35, 36.

† The writer was once at a "class meeting," where an acquaintance of his gave very much such "an experience" as that described by Dr. Alexander. Up to this period, all had gone on prosperously, but the announcement of such sad imperfections was received with silence, disturbed perhaps by an occasional groan. My friend was evidently thought to be a backslider, and in danger of making shipwreck.

Now it is obvious that if Dr. Alexander, in these extracts, describes the operations of the Spirit in sanctifying the soul, the genuine experiences of growth in grace, Arminian *Perfectionism* must be a grievous self-delusion. Yet, if history record any truth, it is that every distinguished man of God, who has been made an ornament to genuine Christianity, and a rich blessing to his race, from the fourth to the eighteenth century, has had just *such* experience as that of Dr. Alexander. Such were Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Turretine, the Erskines, Whitefield, Owen, Baxter, Edwards, Brainerd, Payson, M'Cheyne, Chalmers, and many others. We wish to judge no man. To his own master each must stand or fall. But so long as the rational mind arrives at its decisions by trains of logical deduction, it is impossible to avoid the inference that *Perfectionism* is only another name for blindness to the spirituality of the law, and consequent *self-deception* as to the essence of scriptural holiness. As the law is a transcript of the Divine attributes, the Perfectionist will be constantly liable to form erroneous conceptions of God, the extent of his righteous requirements, and his infinite hatred of sin.

12. It is easy to allege with Dr. Clarke, that we are “the advocates of sin,” “pleading for Baal,” &c. So the Universalist charges the *Arminian* with being *the friend* of both endless sin and misery; and the Pelagian claims to plead for the original *purity* of fallen man! We plead for *the truth*, by which alone men are sanctified, agreeably to the prayer of our Saviour. If Perfectionism be a gross error, it must be the patron of crime, not of holiness.

Scarcely any thing in this whole matter is more surprising, than the *strange methods* by which such writers as Dr. Clarke *impose upon themselves* in battling for their favorite figment. Thus, in 1 John 5 : 18, we read, “Whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” “This,” says Dr. Clarke, “is spoken of *adult Christians*,” or those whom Mr. Wesley calls “*grown Chris-*

tians," in distinction from babes in Christ. But if this be true, then the inspired John teaches that *every one* "born of God" is a *grown Christian*, and "*sinneth not*." In other words, every *regenerate person* is "*delivered from all inward as well as outward sin!*" But this is an obvious *error*, as Arminians will admit. Such is an example of Dr. Clarke's pleading for *his Baal* of Perfectionism. So that with the "*Biblical Repertory*," we are tempted to believe that such Perfectionists are under "*a peculiar species of monomania, which blinds them to the plain deductions of common sense.*"\*

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## LETTER XIII.

### REGENERATION—CHARACTERISTICS AND FRUITS.

REV. SIR—The discussions of previous Letters prepare us to examine that "great supernatural change, the work of the Holy Ghost, the effect of the power of God,"† that "*effec-tual calling*" which the Scriptures represent as of the essence of true piety and preparation for heaven.

### VII. THE DIFFICULTIES OF METHODISM, UPON THE SUBJECT OF REGENERATION AND THE EVIDENCES OF A CHANGE OF HEART.

That this is a subject of immense importance, is obvious to all. Conformity to the Divine pattern is the only method to insure either comfort or safety to the soul. This will strike conviction to the heart of the secure and careless, encourage the feeble Christian, confirm the wavering, and expose the hypocrite; but forsaking this infallible guide, we must inevitably wander into the most extravagant forms of delusion.

\* For July, 1842, to which we are indebted for a number of suggestions in the latter part of this Letter.

† Dr. Witherspoon.

Indeed, upon correctness in this matter are suspended the peace, purity, and general welfare of the Christian church. How, then, is this subject treated among Methodists?

It does not promise well that among their *twenty-five "Articles of Religion,"* “the new birth,” like the doctrine of Foreknowledge, finds no place. The only allusion to it at all, is in the XVIIth, on Baptism, which is said to be “a sign of regeneration or the new birth.” But whether this be a change of external state from the world to church membership, or a far deeper and more radical transformation of *nature*, “the Articles” leave us to discover. In two or three other places in the “Discipline,” in connection with the “form of Baptism,” it is incidentally mentioned as a being “born again,” and “born of the Holy Ghost.”

We naturally judge of the acknowledged *importance* of this great essential of the Christian life, by the *prominence* it holds in the Arminian standards. We must conclude, therefore, that “purgatory,” “speaking in unknown tongues,” “the marriage of ministers,” and “Christian men’s goods,” are much more essential in true religion than “the new birth”—each of the former having a separate “Article” to expound and enforce its importance! Let us take a closer view of the subject.

1. Of the nature of this change Messrs. Wesley and Clarke appear to hold conflicting sentiments. Mr. W. says, “It is a great change which God works in the soul, \* \* \* when he raises it from the *death of sin* to the life of righteousness.” “It is not the same thing with sanctification”—“which is a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees.” “The new birth is *a part* of sanctification, not the whole. It is the *gate* of it, *the entrance* into it.”\* This is scriptural and true. Now hear Dr. Clarke. Commenting on John 3:3, “*Ye must be born again,*” he says: “The *new birth* here spoken of, comprehends not only what is termed justification

\* Sermon on the New Birth.

or pardon, but also *sanctification* or holiness"—“the renewings of the whole soul in righteousness and true holiness.” So when speaking of the text, “*Whoso is born of God sinneth not,*” he says it means “adult Christians \* \* \* who are cleansed from *all sin.*” In other words, “whoso is born of God is cleansed from all sin!” Mr. Wesley, however, as before quoted, says “this new birth is the *gate* or *entrance* to sanctification, which is *progressive*, and carried on by *slow degrees.*” As these statements are diametrically opposed to each other, they cannot both be true.

2. Arminian writers contradict themselves in other aspects of this subject. Mr. Wesley says—“All men are by nature not only *sick*, but *dead* in trespasses and sins, and it is *not possible* for them to do anything well, till God *raise them from the dead.*”\* But Watson affirms that “God has appointed *this change* (new birth) to be effected in answer to our prayers; that acceptable prayer supposes *we desire* the blessings we ask, that we *accept of Christ* as the appointed *medium* of access to God, \* \* \* and that we *exercise faith* in the promises of God.” “All these,” he adds, “suppose regeneration to be *a good in prospect*”† (not in possession). Was there ever a more positive contradiction! The unregenerate, according to Watson, prays, desires the blessings of “the new birth,” accepts of Christ as the way to the Father, and exercises *faith* in the Divine promises. Yet Mr. Wesley affirms that the unregenerate are dead in sin, and cannot *do anything well*, until they are renewed. Of course it follows, that faith, prayer in the name of Christ, &c. being performed by the unrenewed, are “*not anything well!*” How, then, can such *bad actions* lead to the *new birth?*

3. Mr. Watson tells us, “that the preparatory process which *leads to regeneration*, commences with conviction and contrition and goes on to *a repentant* turning to the Lord.” Dr. Fisk adopts the same view: “The Holy Spirit exerts

\* Sermon on Working out Salvation.      † Inst. part 2, chap. 24.

this regenerating power *on conditions* to be first complied with." \* \* \* "Repentance and faith are supposed to be the gospel conditions—antecedents to regeneration." \* \* \* "We must repent in order to be renewed."\* But if "faith and repentance" may be exercised by *an unregenerate* person, then such a man may be *saved* without regeneration—for "he that believeth shall be saved." And if a person "dead in trespasses and sins" may have true *faith and repentance*, why not all the other graces of the Spirit? But Mr. Wesley truly says—"Holiness *cannot* commence in the soul till that change (regeneration) be wrought, \* \* \* till we are brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God; till we are born of God."† Which of these contradictory authorities are viewed as teaching the true *Arminian* gospel, we do not pretend to decide.

4. Such being the *doctrine* as taught by Arminians, we proceed to its practical developments. Enter their houses of worship, attend their camp meetings, class meetings, &c. and truly it will demand a discerning eye to discover the feeblest resemblance to the humility, meekness, docility, acquaintance with Scripture, and knowledge of the human heart and the Christian warfare, required by the Saviour and his Apostles. Inquire of their converts the evidence of a saving change; and instead of that clear, intelligent disclosure of the operations of the Divine Spirit in awaking, convincing, humbling, persuading, and pointing to a Redeemer's blood, you will receive a confused statement of "getting religion," amid loud noise and confusion of tongues, more like a religious Babel than the city of God. Investigate still further the ground of their hope, and you will receive, not a statement of Christian faith, a simple, consolatory, heart-purifying dependence upon the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of Christ, but a declaration of bold assurance, of self-confidence, and many

\* Calvinistic Controversy, No. 15.

† Sermon on the New Birth.

unequivocal signs of a deceived heart.\* Instead of self-knowledge, a deep acquaintance with the errors, corruptions, and various devices of the human heart, you will hear of Christian perfection and a continued willingness to die. Instead of a meek reliance upon the Saviour's merits and the Spirit's aid, you will be told that "God is merciful, and if I only persevere and keep straight on in the path of duty, God will continue to bless me in prayer, and all will be well at last."

The extensive prevalence in that denomination of the most mischievous errors respecting the new birth, flows principally from the defective and unscriptural representations made by their religious teachers. What, for example, is better adapted to mislead a serious inquirer, than the following statements respecting faith. "Faith *necessarily* implies an *assurance* that Christ *loved me* and gave himself for me." Wes. Serm. vol. i. p. 209. Again: "Whoever has a *sure confidence* in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, *he is a child of God.*" Doct. Tracts, p. 300. In the first passage, the young or feeble Christian is told, that until he has a *full assurance* of the love of Christ, he remains *an enemy* of God; and in the second, the formalist and hypocrite who have worked themselves into a *strong confidence* of the Divine favor, are assured that they are *children of God.*† Under such instruction with regard to the "fruits of the Spirit," we need not be surprised at the grossest mistakes respecting his gracious work upon the heart.

\* It is cheerfully admitted that some parts of this picture may be rather strongly colored for certain localities, particularly our cities and large villages. Notwithstanding, "we speak that we do know."

† And yet Wesley elsewhere flatly contradicts himself in the above assertion, and writes in the following scriptural style: "What is saving faith? I dare not say that it is only *believing confidently* my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake; for if I live in sin, that belief is a *destructive conceit.*" Doct. Tracts, p. 232. A man of Wesley's loose views and rapid pen, ought to have had at least a good memory.

Nor is the doctrine of grace, as taught by these Arminians, at all better adapted to foster aught but a spurious piety. In reply to the position that "God might justly have passed by all men," Wesley says, "Are you sure he might? I cannot find it in the word of God. Therefore I reject it as a bold, precarious assertion." "That God might justly, for *my unfaithfulness to his grace*, have given me up long ago, I grant; but this supposes me to have had that grace," &c. Doct. Tracts, p. 25. Which is the same as to say, that God could not *justly have punished* mankind without providing a Saviour, and through him, *sufficient grace* for them—that although it will be just in him to punish for "unfaithfulness to his grace," yet to inflict the penalty of his broken law, without first providing grace for sinners, *would be unjust*. In other words, that God's infinite grace in giving his only begotten Son, was not an act of grace at all, but an act of simple justice! Could anything be more suited to cherish pride and self-sufficiency in the human heart?

What Christian mind but will revolt, and even shudder, whilst perusing the following passage from the same volume. Speaking of Christian perfection, "We know," says Wesley, "that God may, *with man's good leave*, cut short his work, in whatever degree he pleases, and do the usual work of many years in a moment." We submit to every candid and intelligent man, whether the spiritual instruction, of which the above is a specimen, may not, *a priori*, be expected to produce, not the fair and glorious lineaments of the image of God, but a monstrous abortion of everything like genuine piety. Nor will the authorized test of such religion be more rational and scriptural than the thing itself.

From some things which follow in the present Letter, I cheerfully acknowledge that there are many honorable exceptions, especially among the more intelligent and better educated Methodists. We speak of Arminian Methodism fully developed, not as she is modified and restrained by the

proximity and social influence of other bodies of Christians, or under check from educational and other similar causes.

### VIII. THE DIFFICULTIES OF METHODISM, WITH REFERENCE TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GENUINE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We charge that your system as fully worked out in this country, encourages its advocates to place much confidence in certain wild and disorderly proceedings which, as they are at an infinite remove from the "reasonable service" of true piety, so are they expressly condemned by the Wesleys and others, the wisest and best of the sect. Reference is here had to those scenes of confusion so common in that denomination—jumping, falling, screaming, swooning, shouting Glory, glory, glory, clapping the hands, &c. With these exercises, nature is, in frequent instances, completely exhausted; the person lies in a state of collapse for many hours, and is said to be highly favored with the overpowering influences of the Spirit. Some are seen ascending saplings, or whatever object stands most convenient, "climbing up to heaven to see Jesus." Others are engaged in laughing, throwing back the body, swinging the arms at full sweep, rolling on the ground, &c. To work the minds of the people up to such a pitch of frenzy (I can call it nothing else), is manifestly a principal object at camp-meetings, and a main design of all the machinery of enthusiasm employed upon such occasions. But let any intelligent reader of the Scriptures ask himself, "Where do we find examples of all this in the Bible?" Is it in the case of Saul of Tarsus? But even he was not bereft of his senses, or presence of mind; for he conversed intelligently with Jesus. Nor was he converted until three days after meeting with Christ on the way to Damascus, when visited by Ananias by Divine direction. Besides let Methodism exhibit the appearance of the Son of God in the brightness of his glory, a similar miraculous splendor, the same supernatural voice, and we will

believe her prostrations to be caused by the same power which struck with consternation the persecuting Saul. Indeed we may safely challenge the advocates of this system to produce a solitary example of conversion, under the preaching of Christ and his Apostles, bearing even a distant resemblance to the jumping, jerking, falling down, rolling on the ground, clapping of hands, loud laughing, and swooning away into a senseless or pulseless condition, which are such frequent and distinguishing characteristics of Methodism. But perhaps the Saviour and his Apostles were not such powerful preachers as some of the present day! We hold steadfastly that all true religion begins and is carried on by the Divine Spirit, experienced in the heart; but this is perfectly distinct from the natural agitation of the passions, into which it seems the object of the Methodist leaders to lash the minds of their members. “We can see no Divine power in the mechanical groan and the periodical ‘Amen,’ without which they think their meetings lifeless. Nor is there any evidence that Christ and the Apostles encouraged those tumultuous assemblies in which numbers are at the same moment uttering petitions with stentorian voice, and others are going about among the people, urging them to cry out till their nerves are wrought upon to screeching, swooning, and various hysterical affections. When attempts are made to impose this on the world for religion, serious Christians will be disposed to weep, and the rest of mankind to laugh.”

It is not intended to follow the defenders of these exercises in their attempts to enlist the Bible in favor of “confusion.” A specimen or two of their logic, is all that our limits will permit. For example, they quote a number of passages containing the words “rejoice, shout, shout aloud,” &c.; but they forget that an equal number of texts may be adduced, exhorting “*to keep silence, be still,*” &c. The strong imagery of such passages is best explained by others, such as Ps. 68: 8—“The mountains and the hills shall break forth before

you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." In like manner, when they cite various texts which represent persons as "leaping and walking, leaping for joy, falling down on the face," &c. they have only shown, what no one will question, "that the expressions of submission, homage and reverence, always have been, and still are, carried to a great degree of extravagance in the eastern countries." So also dancing was a common act of devotion under the Old Testament dispensation—but did Christ and his Apostles ever *dance*? But perhaps the most singular specimen of *reasoning* from Scripture in defense of these extravagances of Methodism, remains to be stated. A writer refers to the scenes of Pentecost, when some said of the Apostles, "these men are full of new wine," and sagely reasons thus: "Now, as drunken men are generally 'wild and disorderly,' there must have been something in the *proceedings of those referred to that induced these beholders to conclude they were drunk!*" This, we believe, out-Methodizes Methodism! The Apostles *acted* in such a manner as led the people *to think they were drunk!* Camp and quarterly meetings will not stand in the comparison; no person ever suspects *their* extravagance to be the fruit of intoxication. But is it possible this interpreter of Holy Writ can discover no other pretext for the charge of drunkenness made against the Apostles, than that *they behaved as if they were drunk!* Has it entirely escaped his notice that they were empowered to speak in languages different from their vernacular tongue? And that being known as Jews of the common sort, they were supposed to be uttering the incoherent ravings of intemperance, by those who understood them not? This solution is at least rather more respectful to that sacred impulse by which they were directed, than the supposition that the Apostles acted like *drunken men!*

The effects produced by the tremendous enginery of conversion, employed upon the great occasions, are surprising

only because they are so small. Preaching, praying, singing, loud vociferation, earnest exhortation, many tears—all mingled together and vehemently enforced with violent gesticulation—great exhaustion of bodily strength and consequent derangement of the nervous system—the darkness and gloom of the scenery at night, contrasting with the bright reflection from numerous gleaming fires—the oft repeated representation of the judgment day, as exhibited in the separation of those who crowd the altar from those who are left without—these and a thousand other devices to strike the imagination, render it only a matter of surprise, that among the mixed multitude who flock to camp meetings, *so few* are sufficiently deranged in body and bewildered in mind to go through the exercise of camp-conversion. Examples indeed are not uncommon of persons being caught in this whirlwind of the passions, and afterward confessing with shame that they were totally beside themselves, and knew not what they were doing.\* That such measures are at least as well adapted to promote the cause of error and fanaticism, as that of truth and righteousness, is evident. The Rev. Dr. Miller, in his Letters to Presbyterians, states the fact, “that one of the far-famed fanatical Unitarians, called Chrystians, boasted that he had drawn at least fifty persons to anxious seats, merely by the influence of his own singing”—an agent, as is well known, of vast power in Methodism. And there is much reason to fear that a large proportion of what is called mourning and conversion in that denomination, is to be traced to a cause equally removed from “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

In confirmation of these statements, we quote from some essays on “Practical Methodism,” originally published in the “Christian Advocate,” a monthly magazine edited by the late venerable Ashbel Green, D. D. These essays are by common consent attributed to the pen of the Rev. (now Dr.) N. Murray, better known as “Kirwan.” Speaking of the

\* A case of this kind came under my own observation.

converts made at camp meetings and similar gatherings, he says: "Whilst some have honored their profession by a life of godliness, I have known many others to return to the beggarly elements of the world. Four or five years since, in the town adjoining that in which I live, about one hundred were converted, or, to use Methodist language, got religion at a camp meeting. At this time scarcely *one* of them maintains a character of piety." "It is not a very uncommon circumstance to hear an individual exclaim, at these meetings, that he has 'got religion,' and to see him, before he gets home, *quite drunk*. And a more common circumstance is, to see them 'brought out with power,' and to hear them pray and exhort and shout; and a few months afterward, to hear them say that 'religion is all a hoax.' To these things," adds the writer, "I can testify."

But what say the wisest and best of the fraternity upon these subjects? Mr. Fletcher, author of the Checks, thus writes to Charles Wesley, under date of November 22d, 1762: "I have heard the melancholy news of many of our brethren overshooting sober and steady Christianity in London. Oh! that I could stand in the gap, and by sacrificing myself shut this immense abyss of *enthusiasm*. The corruption of the best things is the worst of corruptions. Allowing but half of the report is true, the rest shows that spiritual pride, presumption, arrogance, stubbornness, party spirit, uncharitableness, prophetic mistakes—in short, every sinew of enthusiasm is at work in many of that body." The following are the words of Charles Wesley upon the same subject: "To-day one came, who was pleased to fall into a fit for my entertainment. He beat himself heartily. I thought it a pity to hinder him; so *instead of singing over him*, as had often been done, we left him to recover at his leisure. A girl, as she began to cry, I ordered to be carried out. *Her convulsions were so violent as to take away the use of her limbs, till they laid her without at the door, when she immedi-*

*ately found her legs and walked off.* Some very *unstill sisters*, who all took care to stand near me, and tried who could cry the loudest, have been as *quiet as lambs*, since I have had them removed out of my sight. The first night I preached there, half my words were lost through their outcries. Last night I gave public notice, that whosoever cried so as to drown my voice, should be quietly carried to the farthest corner of the room. But my porter had no employ the whole night." Would Charles Wesley have spoken thus, if he had considered these things the tokens of a work of God?

It is well known that *laughter* is no uncommon phenomenon among the Methodists. Mr. John Wesley describes a scene of this sort: "We called at a house \* \* \* where we found several rejoicing in God, and several mourning after him. While I prayed with them, many crowded into the house, some of whom burst into a *strange involuntary laughter*, so that my voice could scarce be heard, and when I strove to speak louder, a sudden hoarseness seized me. Then *the laughter* increased. I perceived it was SATAN, and resolved to pray on. Immediately the Lord rebuked him, that laughter was at an end, and so was my hoarseness." In another place he says both he and his brother Charles were seized with this "*loud laughter*"; "*nor could we possibly refrain, though we were ready to tear ourselves in pieces.*" \*

Mr. Wesley discovered these workings of *Satan* also among the mountains of Wales. Speaking of the movements in that quarter he says:

"Some give out a verse, which they sing over and over again with all their might, thirty or forty times. Meanwhile some are violently agitated, and *they leap up and down in all manner of postures for hours.*" He adds: "I think there needs no great penetration to understand this. They are honest, upright men, who really love God in their hearts; but they have little experience either of the ways of God or

\* Works, vol. iv. pp. 35, 39; vol. iii. p. 183.

of the devices of Satan. *So he (Satan) serves himself of their simplicity, in order to wear them out and to bring discredit on the work of God.*" \*

Mr. Wesley, in vol. five of his Journal, says: "Many have been awakened, justified and perfected in love; but even while full of love, SATAN drives many of them to extravagance. This appears in several instances: 1. Frequently three or four, yea, ten or twelve, PRAY ALOUD together. 2. Some, perhaps many, scream altogether as loud as they possibly can; several drop down as dead, and are as stiff as a corpse, but in a while they start up and cry, GLORY, GLORY, perhaps twenty times together. Just so (he adds) do the French Prophets, and very lately the Jumpers in Wales, bring the *real work into contempt.*"

In the third volume of his works, Mr. W. tells of his visiting one of these French Prophets. "She leaned back in her chair and seemed to have strong workings in her breast, with deep sighings intermixed. Her head and hands and, by turns, every part of her body seemed to be in a kind of convulsive motion." "This continued about ten minutes, \* \* then she spoke much, all as in the person of God, of the fulfilling of the prophecies, the coming of Christ now at hand, and the spread of the gospel over all the earth. Then she exhorted us not to be in haste in judging her spirit to be or not to be of God," &c. "Two or three of our company were much affected, and believed she spake by the Spirit of God. But this," adds Mr. W. "was by no means clear to me. The motion might be either hysterical or artificial. And the same words any person of a good understanding and well versed in Scripture, might have spoken." Afterward he tells of "one who did run well, till hindered by some of those who were called French Prophets." This led him to preach against their delusions.

Again: Mr. Wesley objects to such bodily exercises on

\* Works, vol. iv. p. 157.

the score of decency. In his sermon on “Knowing Christ after the flesh,” he remarks : “ But some may say, refraining from these warm expressions may check the fervor of devotion. It is very possible it may, *such fervor as has passed for devotion.* It may prevent *loud shouting*, horrid unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, throwing about the legs and arms of men and women, not only *shocking to religion*, but to *common decency!* But it will never check, much less prevent, true scriptural devotion.” Serm. vol. iii. p. 266. What would Mr. Wesley have said, could he have attended some of our Methodist meetings, especially our camp meetings, where all these phenomena, accounted by him disorderly, and the *work of the devil*, are confidently taken by his professed followers to be indubitable evidence of the power of God ? On the subject of the indecency of these things, another of the Methodist society declares, “ I myself have actually witnessed an unconsciousness of the most indelicate female attitudes even in the house of God.” These facts, Rev. Sir, and others of the same or equal authenticity, which we suppress, are not reported by the *slanderers* of Methodism, but by her decided friends and advocates. They are now published with feelings very different from those of pleasure; but the imperious demands of truth seem to require the full exposure of this corrupt system.

Speaking of these “bodily emotions,” Mr. Wesley says : “The essence of religion is quite independent of them.” “I *always* ascribe *these symptoms* to *Satan* tearing them.” “Some were buffeted of *Satan* in an unusual manner, by such a spirit of *laughter* as they could in no wise resist.” \* He also found it necessary to warn all such persons “not to judge of the spirit whereby any one spoke, by any *dreams, visions, or revelations made to their souls*, any more than by their tears, or *any involuntary effects* wrought upon their

\* Works, vol. i. p. 560 ; vol. ii. p. 69.

bodies.”\* And in his tract on “Christian Perfection:” “Give no place to a heated imagination. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, to be from God. They may be from him; they may be from nature; *they may be from the devil.*” “You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour, if you despise or lightly esteem reason, knowledge, or human learning; every one of which is an excellent gift of God, and may serve the noblest purposes.” And let it check that fond dependence upon imaginary visions and voices from above, on which so many build their hopes of Divine acceptance, to know that *by the same test* the author of one of the worst productions of infidelity has claimed the seal of heaven to his profane speculations.†

In reference to these proofs of Mr. Wesley’s opposition to such extravagances, the late Dr. Archibald Alexander wrote to the author, that “he (Mr. W.) had patronized, at one period of his life, almost *every species of disorder* in public worship, even when in England it was carried to its greatest extremes.” It is sad to think that he who could write so scripturally and judiciously on these subjects, should afterward *destroy* the faith and order he once upheld!

Let us now look at the testimony of one or two of the leading moderns, in relation to these departures from scriptural simplicity and sobriety. Adam Clarke’s preaching is thus described by Lorenzo Dow, in his Journal of July 20, 1806: “The sermon was well delivered in speech, though there appeared much deadness at the beginning; but in his last prayer he grew somewhat fervent, until God began to send down his power, and there began a move among the people, when he seemed to lower, *as if to ward off the move and prevent NOISE.*”

Lorenzo also bears the following testimony: “I saw Adam Clarke—he acknowledged to me that he was once in the spirit

\* Works, vol. iii. p. 141.

† Lord Herbert. See “Loland’s View of the Deistical Writers,” p. 20.

of the great revival in Cornwall, &c. ‘But now,’ said the Doctor, ‘*I see better.*’ His mind was made up against the camp-meetings in America as being improper, and the revival attending them as a thing accountable upon natural principles.” With respect to NOISE in public worship, it seems “the English connexion in general are determined to prevent it, as appears from their *conduct* and publication in their magazine.”

These are understood to be the prevailing feeling and practice of the Methodists of Great Britain. “Charles Wesley and John Fletcher were converted at their own bedside and alone: John Wesley while sitting in a church hearing the reading of Luther’s preface to the Romans: Dr. Coke in his pulpit while preaching to others. Both Charles Wesley and John Fletcher say they felt no great emotions of joy; and Dr. Coke and John Wesley were so tranquil, that none but themselves were at the time acquainted with the change.” Such is the decided testimony of the early fathers and best friends of the system against the very abuses which are in this country boldly published and propagated as Christianity; as in fact the essence and highest excellence of that religion, which is the noblest offspring of him who is “a God of order and not of confusion.” We scarcely need notice the feeble attempt which has been made to invalidate this testimony by alleging the frequent examples of reformation from gross vice in connection with these abuses. The fanatical Unitarians, called *Chrystians*, at their great meetings, have their mourners’ benches, women pray in public,\* old backsliders are

\* The Methodists, as is well known, encourage their women to pray and exhort in their public assemblies. The following is Wesley’s comment on 1 Cor. 14: 34, 35: “Let your women *keep silence* in the church,” &c. “*It is a shame for women to speak* in the church.” Robert Barclay indeed says, ‘Paul here only reproves the *inconsiderate and talkative women.*’ But the text *says no such thing.* It evidently speaks of *women in general.* Again: The Apostle Paul saith to Timothy, ‘Let your women *learn in silence* with all subjection: For I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man (which public teaching necessarily implies), but to

reclaimed and drunkards reformed. Do these results stamp error and extravagance with the image of truth, or sanction the denial of the supreme divinity of him who is “God over all blessed for evermore?”

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## LETTER XIV.

### CAMP MEETINGS AND OTHER PROSELYTING MEASURES.

REV. SIR—We are informed in your Discipline, that “God’s design in raising up the preachers called Methodists in America, was to *reform the continent* and spread Scripture holiness over these lands.” This is quite *modest*, and if there be any one aspect of this great work, which is more than all others peculiar and distinctive, it is found in your “labors of love” toward the poor benighted *Calvinists!* Thus says Mr. Stevens in his history, when Methodism made its first entrance at Lynn (Mass.), “it came as a protest against the tenets of pre-election, pre-reprobation, final perseverance, infant damnation, &c.” (p. 41.) “No church,” he adds, “preaches more staunchly against Calvinism, Universalism, &c.; yet the *opposite doctrines* are nowhere stated in our ‘Articles of Religion.’” A beautiful set of “Articles” which even a Universalist may *honestly* adopt!

In proof of these proselyting schemes, the writer on “Practical Methodism” (who is commonly understood to be “Kirwan,” Dr. Murray) says—“Another characteristic of their preaching is the abuse of other denominations. \* \* \* For sectarian purposes they pervert and caricature the opinions and belief of their Calvinistic brethren. This sin, as far as I *be in silence.*” 1 Tim. 2: 11, 12. Barclay replies, “We think this not repugnant to this (our) doctrine.” “Not repugnant,” retorts Wesley—“I do not suffer a woman *to teach?*—Then I know not what is.” See *Letter to a Quaker.*

know, is co-extensive with Methodism. If there are individual *exceptions*, I have not met them. \* \* \* Above all things else, the doctrines of grace are their peculiar abhorrence." "They put their own false and denied conclusions into our very creed, and proclaim to the world that we receive them (these blasphemous sentiments) with a cordial credence;" or charge us with "duplicity" in rejecting them! "From doctrines," continues the same writer, "they pass to a *hireling ministry*, \* \* \* whom they call by the charitable names of *wolves*, *hirelings*, *fleece-seekers*, and this I have known them do, when their own salaries for preaching were much greater than those of the parties assailed." "When a person is reported serious, a visit may very soon be expected from the circuit-rider. If in the course of conversation he discovers any leaning to another fold, the preacher is sure to descant upon the character and doctrines of its shepherd and sheep; and that in such a way as to make the impression that they are not walking in all the ordinances of God blameless. To verify these remarks, I could narrate at least twenty instances within my own knowledge." Dr. Musgrave of Philadelphia adds—"They often speak as if there were *no real conversions* under the ministry of other denominations, and no vital or experimental religion among other sects. "Come to our meeting," they say to the members of other churches—"Come to our meeting, if you want to get religion!" And one of them remonstrated with a relative against sending her child to a Presbyterian Sabbath school, as follows—"What! do you want your child to go to hell?" Such are some of their favorite methods of "*reforming the continent and spreading holiness!*" Yet it is a familiar fact to those who have had the best opportunities of judging, that the multitude of spurious conversions under such labors, tends to make the impression on many minds, that *all vital religion is a sham!* And where Unitarianism and Universalism have most extensively prevailed, a large proportion of these deluded errorists

had in most cases been Methodist converts, and some of them even preachers. In Massachusetts, Arminianism rocked the cradle of Socinianism in a hundred churches—all of which abandoned Calvinism, stopped awhile at the half-way house of Arminius, and then became Unitarians.\*

One of the chief instruments in “reforming this continent” (*i. e.* chiefly its Protestant churches) we now propose to consider with some care :

#### IX. THE DIFFICULTIES OF ARMINIAN METHODISM, IN CONNECTION WITH CAMP MEETINGS.

It is not intended to represent as unlawful the mere act of worship in the open air or in the woods. On the contrary, we freely admit that there often occur exigencies in the history of the church, which render such a practice highly commendable. Often have the people of God, in days gone by, been driven to the dens and caves of the earth, that they might enjoy the privilege of assembling in some of nature’s thick recesses, to worship the God of the whole earth agreeably to the dictates of reason and conscience. And there are doubtless many situations in free and civilized countries, where the homage due to the King of heaven may and ought to ascend unitedly from the great congregation, even where no temple nor altar is dedicated to the service. We may even advance a step further: There is something both sublime and beautiful, in thus employing the green earth and the dazzling canopy of heaven as a temple for the praise of Him who hath said, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool,” and whom “the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain.”

Why then do we protest against Methodist camp meetings?

1. Because they afford to the mixed multitude who attend them, unusual and most abundant advantages for the practice

\* Cooke’s Centuries. Mr. C. is an able and energetic Congregationalist, and a sound Calvinist.

of wickedness in many of its foulest forms. It is well known that whilst the mass of the steady, orderly, and influential men of the community, who give tone to society, and impart a healthful direction to the current of its manners and customs, take little or no interest in such assemblages, seldom attend, and then for a very short time—on the other hand, persons of almost every shade of color and character are advertised, invited, and expected to attend; and it is of these for the most part that Methodism calculates her gain. It is not meant that persons of this description should not have the gospel preached to them. That is not the question. “Is the camp meeting the **BEST METHOD** of bringing them under the purifying influence of the gospel?” Prove this—and then the more you can crowd together on the camp ground the better. But is it the wisest way to make such men holy, to press them together for several days in succession, and several nights, too, where as “iron sharpeneth iron,” and fire kindleth fire, and depravity stimulates to sin, so the social principle and the combined energies of vice excite to emulation in deeds of enormous wickedness? Is it the best way to bring together in dangerous combination for many days and nights, men and women in mixed multitude, where, it cannot be denied, great facilities are presented, to kindle unholy fires in the soul, and practice iniquity in many of its vilest shapes?

2. For let it be remembered that these meetings are generally held in places remote from the habitations of men, frequently at the foot of a mountain—always in the woods; that the night is the time of general leisure from worldly avocations—the time, too, when the excitement at the camp is highest—the attention of the managers is then most confined to the exclusive scenes of the meeting—and the best opportunities are then afforded by the surrounding darkness for the “workers of iniquity to hide themselves;” that hundreds flock to such places for mirth and recreation, and many for much worse purposes; that independently of the indecent

postures (spoken of by Wesley and others), and besides the malign influence of protracted intercourse, the accommodations for lodging at night are such as will commend themselves to no modest person, particularly to no modest female, as can easily be shown by a reference to facts. These and many other things plainly show that these meetings are not sanctioned by good sense or sound morality, much less by that religion which forbids the very "appearance of evil." And when we add the awful profanation of the holy Sabbath, occasioned by the rush of hundreds from every quarter, as to the festal scenes of a holiday, or to the merriment and dissipation of some great fair, well may the serious Christian pause and ask, "Can these things be duty in a land like this, where every neighborhood has or may soon have a convenient house of worship, at which, by traveling a short distance, all may receive instruction in the mysteries of redeeming love?" Surely it cannot be a work of necessity in any sense, to mingle with the worship of the Lord of glory, anything which bears so strong a resemblance to the works of darkness. If indeed the system were so amended, that camp meetings should never extend to the Sabbath, many of the above objections would be removed.\*

If camp meetings were abandoned, Methodism would lose one chief element of her power, especially of her *proselyting*

\* Says the Boston *Puritan*: "The worst evil is the extensive and reckless desecration of the Sabbath. On that day far more than others, the whole community is in motion. Loaded vehicles, cracking whips, foaming steeds and humming wheels are the order of the day. It is the great holiday of all the young, gay and thoughtless of both sexes, who from the distance of twenty miles or more thus drive in throngs to the holy fair. Of the many young people of my acquaintance who have frequented the camp ground on the Sabbath, I could rarely learn that any of them heard either a sermon or a prayer. They strolled about with a view to amuse themselves and gratify curiosity merely; and I have no hesitation in saying, that on camp meeting Sabbaths they have seen more evil than during all the rest of the year; and that many of them have at such times learned more wickedness than they had ever known elsewhere."

power. "They usually have on hand," remarks Dr. Musgrave, "some extraordinary preacher," or "wonderful orator," or "great revivalist"—who is the most eloquent, powerful and successful preacher that has ever appeared! Their members flock from all parts of city and country, and everywhere the *news* is circulated from pulpit and class meeting. Many, not Methodists, go without suspecting that the object is, if possible, to *proselyte* them to Methodism." "Now is the time to give Calvinism the most deadly thrusts!" "Presbyterians teach doctrines which represent God as more false, cruel and unjust than ———! the non-elect are tempted of God and compelled to sin *as a pretense* to damn them! Children *not a span* long, are in hell suffering the torments of unquenchable fire!" Thus the *design* "to reform the continent" and "spread scriptural holiness," goes forward with tremendous power!!

"But what," adds the writer supposed to be "Kirwan," "is the greatest evil of these strange measures, is their effect in begetting improper notions of Divine truth. Among the Methodists there is very much religious irreverence arising no doubt from their improper views of the Divine character. Hence their boisterous and unmeaning prayers—the great familiarity with which they treat the Most High—their crude notions of 'getting religion,' and of sinless perfection. They seem to suppose that religion can be obtained and lost at any time—that it consists in a boisterous agitation of the passions—that other means than prayer and the avoidance of temptation, are to be employed in overcoming the devil—and that reverence and order in religious worship are the characteristics of coldness and formality. A man of my acquaintance a few years since, cried out, in an evening meeting among the Methodists—'Brethren, I have got the devil, and will not let him go till I kill him.' He continued fisting his satanic majesty against the wall for half an hour, whilst the cries of 'Amen' and 'Glory to God' were rising all around him."

But what impression do these and similar traits of the system make upon the world? “A man of intelligence is prompted by curiosity to attend one of the boisterous camp meetings. He goes from tent to tent, from one praying circle to another. He witnesses the fervid enthusiasm of the preachers, which acts upon the mass like a whirlwind upon the ocean. He sees some falling into fits—others exhausted with shouting—others prostrate on the earth and crying out, ‘it made no matter to them whether they went to heaven head or heels foremost’—a scene actually witnessed. He hears twenty or thirty praying at once, and the less fluent brothers and sisters shouting ‘Amen.’ He hears one exclaim, ‘I see the Saviour—there he is;’ and another, ‘I see heaven open and God preparing to descend to us;’ and another crying out, ‘Pray on, brothers and sisters—the blessing will soon come.’ He witnesses little else but irreverence before Him who hath said, ‘The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.’ If such scenes are not well calculated to make the impression that religion is only fitted for the vulgar—that it is all a matter of blind superstition, I know not what scenes are.” That the foregoing statements do not exceed or exaggerate the simple truth, is proved by Dr. Ashbel Green, who affirms that they are in “exact accordance with the reports which were made to him from various quarters.” The facts were such as “had either passed under the observation of the reporters, or were narrated by creditable and pious individuals.”

Again, remarks the writer on “Practical Methodism:” “Another of their evil effects upon the church arises from the *little value they set upon Christian instruction in any of its departments.* Their system is formed mainly with reference to the passions. Their preaching, praying, classes, camp meetings and love feasts, are all conducted so as to affect the passions. As respects instruction, a moral famine pervades every thing they do. This might be expected from

the character of a large majority of their clergy. A person professes conversion to-day, and is admitted to the communion to-morrow ; and thus the church is filled with ignorant members ; ignorant of the Bible, and in a very lamentable degree of the plan of salvation. And their example is exerting a deleterious influence upon other portions of the church. Other denominations, to prevent their adherents from becoming Methodists, '*where they can get religion so easily,*' admit them to membership too hastily."

Wesley himself asserts : "Were I to preach *three years* together in one place, both the people and myself would grow as dead as stones." We may well suspect the piety that would *die* under a three years' trial of this kind. Whatever benefits accrue among the Methodists from "the constant change of preachers," it is certain that it lays a strong temptation in the way of the preacher to neglect the improvement of his mind, after he has gone through a sufficiently extensive course of sermons, which he is at liberty to preach at every successive change of his circuit. The people, too, will be fed with milk, milk, milk. Any thing like systematic discussion of the great truths of the Scriptures in their connected order, is almost entirely out of the question. Abundant facts testify to the truth of these remarks.

While therefore we cheerfully concede to the Methodists the credit which is due them for conveying a measure of religious and moral instruction to a large class of mankind, including many of the most depraved and destitute, we cannot but fear that the foregoing errors and disorders are exerting an influence upon society which is any thing but salutary. Religion will generally be estimated by the character and conduct of her professed followers. And when the worship of the God of the whole earth, the infinitely perfect Spirit, the only object of religious homage, is so widely at variance with the plainest dictates of propriety ; when instead of that "reasonable service" which he requires; extravagance and

confusion prevail; when long and noisy vociferation is substituted for instruction in religious truth; when the object is rather to rouse the animal sensibilities than awaken the conscience, enlighten the understanding and humble the heart; when those in numerous instances are appointed to teach who ought first to learn,\* and the most incongruous statements are gravely announced as the sober conclusions of reason and truth; when the results of natural causes, terror, nervous irritability, bodily exhaustion, &c. are boldly pronounced to be essentials in that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord;" when all this (and there is much more of the same character) is witnessed by men of even ordinary discernment, nothing is more easy and natural than to transfer their feelings of disgust from those who practice these *abuses* of religion, to religion herself. "Where the Methodist religion," says the writer of "Practical Methodism," "has been for a time prevalent, unchecked by the presence of other denominations, you find the talented and influential members of society opposed not only to the Methodists, but to every thing in the form of godliness." "The region in which I live," continues the same writer, "bears a decided testimony to the truth of this fact. Methodism was once dominant. It carried nearly every thing before it; and now the intelligent and influential are generally infidels, or something as bad, and are rarely ever seen within the walls of a church. Methodism is on the wane. The people are becoming tired of it; and that cold chill, the sure precursor of spiritual death, is pervading the whole community." "If this be religion," exclaimed one who was leaving the scenes of a camp ground, "Heaven preserve me from it." As the

\* The example of the disciples, "a few illiterate fishermen," is sometimes adduced in favor of an unlearned ministry. But it seems to be overlooked that those *fishermen* had received, besides miraculous powers, and the inspiration of the Most Holy, *three full years of instruction* from the lips of "the Teacher sent from God;" the very best of all training for the ministry.

scandalous conduct of the Romish clergy has left an eternal stain and stigma upon the very name of priest, so have we reason to fear, will much that Methodism calls religion, prejudice the minds and steel the hearts of thousands against the pure and heavenly doctrines of Divine Revelation.

“But have not Presbyterians sometimes held camp meetings?” Yes! We do not decide upon their expediency or inexpediency in our new settlements, and when properly conducted. The foregoing discussion has reference mainly to the practice of holding these meetings in the vicinity of cities and large villages, in neighborhoods long settled and furnished with many churches and other conveniences for the orderly worship of God. Their propriety among a sparse population, destitute of suitable houses of worship, would depend in a great measure upon their management. But we are persuaded there can be no sufficient plea for such assemblages under other circumstances than such as we have mentioned. This view of the subject will also show the propriety of the remarks we have made upon the method of lodging at night. The “log cabins” of the Far West are *designed* to be only a temporary arrangement, to yield with all possible speed to better accommodations. Necessity in such cases knows no law. But we should all feel the indelicacy, not to say *indecency*, of *voluntarily forsaking* separate chambers, to huddle male and female into the same apartment; and all from the fervor of our zeal for religion and the salvation of souls! Paul was himself a “*tentmaker*.” And though they had no churches to assemble in, we hear of his preaching on “Mars Hill,” in an “upper chamber,” in his own “hired room,” and in an oratory by the river side; but never do we read of his employing his mechanical skill to furnish a camp ground, nor that he ever sanctioned a similar practice.

## LETTER XV.

## ABUSES IN ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENTS.

REV. SIR—Christians generally admit Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be Divine institutions, and therefore of immense value and importance in every system which seeks “the spreading of scriptural knowledge.” We now proceed to examine how this matter is managed in Arminian Methodism.

## X. DIFFICULTIES WITH REGARD TO RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES.

1. Upon this subject, the theory and practice of Methodism seem very well to agree. What are we to think of “Articles and Discipline,” which, after stating that the baptism of children is to be retained in the church, contain *not one word* respecting the character of the parents; and which of course require nothing more, in order to the baptism of their children, from the most profane and vicious, than from the most moral and religious? The whole subject is left as though it were a matter of the utmost indifference. No obligations of any kind are prescribed; no inquiry of knowledge or decent deportment; no demand of future obedience to the Divine precepts. The great point seems to be, to get children baptized, and as many as possible by the Methodist church, with which the parents are thus brought into a kind of connection and membership. On the principle that “coming to us” is to “get religion,” with almost as great certainty as to unite with others is to be destitute of it, this method of attaching persons of every description to the meeting is adopted without scruple; and doubtless the end will fully justify the means. In this way, too, the hearts of the unwary are deceived by a show of great liberality; and an excellent opportunity furnished to declaim against narrow-minded Presbyterians, who believe in the everlasting perdition of helpless infants. We

admit that the preachers suppose their practice to be consistent with the order of Christ's house; but this will not change the essential nature of truth, nor make that right which is wrong, even though, like Saul of Tarsus when persecuting the church, they think they are doing God service.

In the last edition of the "Discipline" (1856), it is said that "*all children*, by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the atonement, are members of the kingdom of God, and therefore *graciously entitled to baptism*"—of course without the slightest reference to the character of the parents; the *title* of the child of infidels being equal to that of the child of believers! It is added, "that as infant baptism contemplates a course of religious instruction, *it is expected* of all parents or guardians, \* \* \* that they use all diligence in bringing them up *in conformity to the word of God*, and they should be solemnly admonished and exhorted to faithfulness therein." "IT IS EXPECTED"—who expects such duties to be performed by *infidel* parents! Who expects such *diligence* from drunkards, profane swearers and others of that sort! Yet, as their children are "*entitled to baptism*," of course the preacher dare not refuse! What an idea; *to expect* "*a course of religious instruction*" to be given in "*the word of God*," from infidels and all sorts of vile characters!

Circumcision (the Old Testament baptism) was never applied to any but the children of Abraham, and to parents and children who became proselytes to Judaism. Yet that was "*the seal of the righteousness of faith*," as much as baptism. Of whose faith? Not surely of the "*faith*" of the infant of eight days old, but of the parent who, in the exercise of "*faith*," gave away the child to the expected Saviour, and came under the obligations implied in such a gift, to bring it up in "*the nurture and admonition of the Lord*." "Circumcision," says Wesley, "*being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those who have any interest in the covenant*—this seems to manifest

*the right of the children of Christians* to these blessings, or that *they* have an interest in this covenant.”\* Doct. Tracts, p. 267. Hence also we find that when the Apostles received into church fellowship the parents, it is generally added they baptized their household—but we never read of their baptizing the household or the children of any who did not profess faith in Christ. The reason was precisely the same for refusing baptism to the offspring of unbelievers, as for denying circumcision to those who were not Jews—“The seal of the righteousness of faith” (applied in either form,) implied the existence of faith—the seal of the covenant, that the covenant had been entered into. Where, therefore, there is no “faith” in exercise, and no covenant embraced and agreed to, to apply the seal of the covenant, is to seal a blank. It is plain, therefore, from the nature of the ordinance, from the nature of the covenant (of which it is the seal), as well as from the character and extent of its obligations, that in the baptism of the infants of the vicious and profane, “who are strangers to the covenants of promise,” the great seal of High Heaven, the solemn ratification of God’s covenant, is appended to a nullity, or what is worse, to an untruth. Something indeed is said about an “unconditional charter,” entitling all infants to the blessings of the covenant, without respect to their parentage, and securing to them, *unconditionally*, the right of baptism. But why were the blessings of this “unconditional charter” limited, in the case of the Jews? Why did it not secure the right of circumcision to the infants of Gentiles? And why was it restricted to those who were united to the professing people of God, either by

\* Watson takes the same view. “The question is, whether the infant children of *believing parents* are entitled to be made parties to the covenant of grace by the act of *their parents?*” “The apostolic practice was to baptize the *houses* (households) of them that *believed*.” “On the supposition that baptism was administered to the children of the parents *who thus believed*, at the same time as themselves and IN CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR BELIEVING, it may be asked,” &c. Vol. ii. pp. 630, 639.

birth or proselytism? Dr. Clarke on Acts 16:32, tells us, "the Jewish practice was invariably to receive the heathen children with (not without) their proselyted parents." And Wesley informs us that "in the Christian church, in its earliest ages, and I think from the Apostles' time, it has been the custom to baptize the infant children of *professed Christians*." Doct. Tracts, p. 275. The father of Methodism, then, no less than the word of God and the example of the Apostles, condemns the practice of administering baptism to the infant children of those who give no scriptural evidence of piety. Man cannot search the heart, but reason may apply the principles of Holy Writ, by which we are to "try the spirits" and test the character and fitness of those who claim for themselves or their offspring, the "sign and seal" of the covenant of grace. To neglect this, is to declare it to be a matter of no importance that institutions of Divine authority should be administered in "truth and righteousness." "The ordinance is inseparably connected with the incumbent duty of 'bringing up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' If this connection is lost sight of—if it is not contemplated at the time, and is practically disregarded afterward, the ordinance becomes nothing better than a useless ceremony and an idle and profane mockery of its Divine author."\*

2. Nor is the practice with regard to the other sacrament

\* This extract is from the pen of the distinguished Dr. Wardlaw, of Glasgow. The Dr. adds: "The profit to the child must be through the medium of the parent; and it has long appeared to me, that it is to the parent, rather than to the child, that infant baptism is in the first instance to be reckoned a privilege." "That multitudes who have their children baptized, never think of the ordinance in any such light, and are quite regardless of the obligations which, I will not say it *imposes*, but which it implies and brings to mind, is a melancholy truth. And I would earnestly admonish those parents of the guilt they are contracting by *their solemn mockery of Heaven*, in the careless profanation of a Divine institution." President Edwards, nearly a century ago, abundantly insisted that "this way of proceeding tends to establish the *stupidity and irreligion of children, as well as the negligence of parents*." Works, vol. iv. p. 427.

of Christ's house at all more agreeable to reason and Scripture. The Book of Discipline prescribes examination\* for admission to the Lord's Supper, but as it says nothing about the topics, every preacher is left to do just what seemeth right in his own eyes. Hence the very superficial investigation of faith and practice at camp meetings, and the common usage of receiving an appearance of tenderness as sufficient recommendation, without inquiry whether the person has been baptized, or whether his character and habits are not scandalous, and will not render him a disgrace to the ordinance, and a just object of contempt to the infidel and scoffer. A member of my church (from whose lips I had the fact), whilst traveling through one of the western counties of Pennsylvania, was present at a quarterly meeting when the communion was administered. When the services were nearly completed, a rough, uncouth person pressed forward toward the altar and demanded the elements, saying, "I came here to get religion, and like to forgot it." After some consultation among the preachers, the bread and wine were presented to him. This, we readily admit, is an extreme, though by no means a solitary case. But where in the authorized Book of Discipline and standard of doctrine, will you find one syllable which condemns such scandalous proceedings. The volume therefore which contains the confession of faith and forms of worship adopted by Methodists, tacitly gives its consent and approbation to this gross outrage upon decency. It will be readily admitted that in the purest churches and under the most cautious discipline, unworthy persons may intrude into the sacraments; but this furnishes no apology for *unforbidden* practices, which reflect dishonor upon the very name of religion.

In reply to these statements it has been said, "that an individual who had previously been *very wicked* might, on

\* The edition of 1856 has *dropped* this item requiring examination, so that not even *that* is now required.

the occasion of a camp meeting, become truly penitent and intend to lead a new life; and it is better to be imposed upon than to stand in the way of one sincere soul in fulfilling the command of Christ." In other words, the Apostle says, "Let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat"—the preacher replies, "Let him become truly penitent, and *intend* to lead a new life; and *leave the examination to a more convenient season!*" The Apostle says, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, and is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, not discerning the Lord's body"—"it is better for us to be imposed upon," replies the preacher, "and that sinners should risk these awful consequences, than that we should stand in the way of one sincere soul in fulfilling the command of Christ." It cannot be proved that Christ ever *commanded* any man to rush from the boisterous excitement of the camp ground, without time for self-recollection and self-examination, to the tender and most solemn exercises of the communion. There is no example of any such practice in the Scriptures; and the language of Paul plainly implies the direct contrary. Wesley, however, asserts that our Lord commanded the very men who were *unconverted* (his disciples), who (in the full sense of the word) were *not believers*, "*to do this in remembrance of him!*" He adduces this to show "the falsehood of the assertion that none but the *converted*, those who are believers in the full sense, ought to communicate.

3. A third head of abuses is the practice of *kneeling* in the act of communion, and much of the language employed in administering the ordinance. The Saviour and his disciples celebrated the first supper ("the *Lord's Supper*," as Paul calls it, 1 Cor. 11:20) in the *common table posture*. "Now when the even was come," says the evangelist Matthew, "he *sat down* with the twelve." "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to the disciples, and said: Take, eat; this is my body." So also

Luke (22:14), "He sat down," &c. And to render the custom of the primitive church still more evident, Paul characterizes the ordinance as "*the Lord's table.*" 1 Cor. 10:21. It is admitted that they *sat* in a leaning attitude, as was then usual, but this does not in the least abate the force of the testimony. Now if the blessed Redeemer has set us the example in adopting this posture, even in *instituting* the sacrament, by what authority do men venture to *change* what he has ordained? If Christ and his disciples *sat down*, who shall authorize a different attitude?

Further: The practice of *kneeling* in receiving the sacramental elements, originated in *superstition*. Pope Honorius the Second is believed to have been the first that ordained this posture; and it grew out of the doctrine of Transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, which had some time previously received the infallible sanction of Pope Innocent the Third. "The most ardent friends of kneeling," says Dr. Miller, "do not pretend to find any example of this posture in the whole history of the church, prior to the *thirteenth* century. And accordingly in the Greek church, which separated from the Latin before the doctrine of Transubstantiation arose, kneeling at the communion is unknown." It must be regarded therefore, as a part of that "will worship and voluntary humility," which characterize the corruptions of the Romish church. Besides, the ordinance is a feast—a feast of confidence, fellowship, joy and thanksgiving; and there is something utterly incongruous in such a posture in such circumstances. "In what nation is it thought suitable to *kneel* at banquets? Where do men eat and drink upon their knees?" It is admitted that it is not done superstitiously among Protestants; but it is undoubtedly adapted to nourish error and superstition, and is liable to great and continual misapprehension by the weak and ignorant. And if the door be thrown open—if the precedent be set of *improving* upon Divine institutions, the way is clear to admit all the worst abominations.

4. "The prayer of consecration," which the elder is required to say, is another "dead fly," emitting by no means a sweet savor. Our "Lord Jesus took bread and blessed it," or "*gave thanks*," as it is recorded by Paul, and as many of the Greek copies of Matthew's Gospel have it. Why will men venture to change the language of Him who instituted this ordinance? And our objections are still stronger when we find the undue importance which is attached to this "prayer of consecration." We are particularly informed that "if the *consecrated bread and wine* be all spent, the elder may *consecrate more* by repeating the *prayer of consecration!*!" And again, that "if the elder be straitened for time, he *may omit any part of the service, EXCEPT THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION.*" But where is all this found in the New Testament? Where has the Saviour intimated that if the elder have not *laid his hands* upon a sufficient quantity of bread and wine, when he first "gives thanks" (or offers "*the prayer of consecration*"), he must "*lay his hands*" upon more, and "give thanks" over again!\* "Who hath required this at your hands?" Does it not savor strongly of the mass, to give such prominence to a form prescribed by man? "EXCEPT *the prayer of consecration!*" The Holy Mother Church has it, "EXCEPT all be said and done by a regularly ordained *priest* in communion with the See of Rome," empowered to *consecrate* the bread or wafer into "the body, blood, soul and divinity" of Christ!

Finally: The unscriptural character of this part of the Methodist Discipline is also manifest in the act of distribution. Paul tells us that he "received of the Lord," that the Lord Jesus said, "Take, eat—this is my body," &c. "This cup is the New Testament in my blood," &c. (1 Cor. 11:24 25.) And with a few unimportant variations, the same is

\* It is remarkable that although our Saviour is said to have "given thanks," just before he distributed the elements, "the prayer of consecration" contains not one syllable properly of the nature of thanksgiving!

the record by Matthew and Luke. But here in the “Discipline,” the form used by the Saviour of men, and specially revealed to the Apostle Paul, is crowded into the “*prayer of consecration*,” and instead thereof, the elder is to say the following: “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for *thee*, preserve thy soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for *thee*, and feed on him by faith with thanksgiving.” And a similar form is used when he distributes the wine, only with the necessary adaptation to the change of the elements. But it is obvious that this, to say the least, is a needless and unauthorized departure from Christ’s own teaching and example. If the Saviour himself selected and used a certain form of words, who will venture to say it is not most agreeable to his will? Can it be right to substitute a different one? And especially is this inquiry important, when *the substituted form* employs a phrasology with regard to the “body and blood” of the Saviour, which has no parallel in the Scriptures, but is strongly tinctured with idolatry. “*The body* of our Lord, &c. *preserve thy soul and body unto everlasting life.*” The Romanist could consistently use such a prayer, because he believes that the bread or wafer is “the body, soul and divinity” of the Saviour. But the sober Christian will say—“Let me employ as nearly as possible the gracious words which proceeded from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake, and who has a *right* to say what shall be the form of administering the most solemn ordinance of his own house.”

It may perhaps be thought that a close adherence to the inspired pattern in administering the sacraments, is not a matter of very much importance. But if Christ and his Apostles have left on record a certain form, why not use it? Can we improve upon it? Would not every Christian revolt, if any uninspired man should take the liberty of changing the baptismal form? Yet why should the one phraseology be esteemed more sacred than the other? Why would it not be

lawful to say—"I baptize thee in the name of the Trinity?" Yet this change would not be so great as has been usual in the form of the other sacrament. The form of baptism is but once recorded (Matt. 28:19), yet we believe there is almost entire uniformity with respect to it, in the Christian world. Whence the unwarranted liberty taken with the other form!

The writer is also aware that in this Letter, and perhaps in some others, he crosses the path of one or two denominations of Christians with whom he wishes to have no controversy, and toward whom he entertains feelings of fraternal regard. If he has occasionally touched the views and usages of other sects, while he asks for a candid perusal of what he may write, he can only express his regret at the necessity which has been laid upon him, of encroaching to some small extent upon *neutral territory*.

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## LETTER XVI.

### METHODIST EPISCOPACY—EXCLUSION OF LAYMEN.

REV. SIR—In the progress of this investigation we come now to the subject of Church Government, as administered in Arminian Methodism.

### XI. DIFFICULTIES IN REGARD TO HER FORM OF GOVERNMENT—IT IS UNSCRIPTURAL, ANTI-REPUBLICAN, UNJUST AND TYRANNICAL.

On page 126 of "the Discipline," it is said that "the Holy Spirit has appointed *divers orders* of ministers in his church." And elsewhere in the same volume, "forms of consecration and ordination" are given for bishops, elders, and deacons, respectively. In the appendix to Buck's Theological Dictionary, written by Dr. Bangs, it is said that in Methodism "three orders of ministers are recognized, and the duties peculiar to each are clearly defined." Dr. Clarke,

in commenting on 1 Tim. chap. 3, v. 1, states that “Episcopacy in the church of God is of *Divine appointment*, and should be maintained and respected. Under God there should be *supreme governors* in the church as well as in the state. The state has its *monarch*: the church has its *bishop*.” “The office of a bishop is from God.” Note, Acts 20:28.

Now that these “divers orders” are the invention of men, and not the appointment of God, has been often and most abundantly proved. For,

1. There is no scriptural evidence whatever that the office of deacon embraced the duty either of teaching or ruling in the church. In support of this position, we refer to the original appointment as recorded in the 6th chapter of Acts, where the object is distinctly declared to be, not the establishment of another order of ministers or teachers, but of a class of men whose business it should be to “serve tables,” or attend to the secular affairs of the church; “but we,” say the Apostles, “will give ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” That some of those who were first appointed deacons, did afterward preach the gospel, and act as evangelists, is not denied; but there is no evidence whatever that they were either ministers or evangelists, *in consequence* of their appointment to “serve tables.” “It is not reason,” say the Apostles, “that we should LEAVE the word of God and serve tables.”

Dr. Bangs, in his “Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy,” p. 14, derives an argument from 1 Tim. 3:8, in support of the ministerial character of deacons: “*Likewise must the deacons be grave*”—but just three verses farther on the Apostle adds, “even so must *their wives* be grave.” Were the deacons’ wives ministers of the gospel? And when Paul subjoins two verses farther down, “*For they that use the office of deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith*,” Dr. Clarke well expresses the meaning—“they are here said to purchase to themselves a

good degree; for instead of having to minister *to the bodies and bodily wants of the poor*, the faithful deacons were raised to minister *in holy things*: and instead of ministering *the bread that perisheth*, they were raised to minister *the bread of life* to immortal souls.” This no doubt was often exemplified when persons exercising the office of deacon diligently and faithfully, were elevated to the higher office of ministers of the everlasting gospel. “It is evident,” says Dr. Scott, an Episcopalian, “that they were appointed to take care of the *property of the church*, and not to the *pastoral office*.” “It seems undeniable that they were appointed *solely* to take care of the temporal concerns of the church; and not, *as deacons*, to preach, or to administer sacred ordinances.” “It appears to me very likely,” continues Dr. Scott, “that both at this and future periods, many who were appointed deacons in the *first instance*, afterward became evangelists or pastors; and when they were fully employed, other deacons were appointed.” Com. on Acts 6:2-6. Since then not a particle of evidence can be gathered from the New Testament, that the first deacons were ministers of the gospel at all, we need not trouble ourselves to disprove the other feature of the system, which places them in an “order” inferior to elders and bishops.\* It is a subject of much curiosity with some persons, to have a distinct reference made to the identical passage or passages of Scripture, upon which the preachers of Methodism rely to establish this difference of “order” among the ministers of Christ. Show us the chapter and verse, and then we will believe that *regularly ordained ministers* of the

\* The “Discipline” (p. 146) authorizes the deacon “to baptize;” but it appears that *one ordination* by “the laying on of the hands of a bishop,” is not sufficient to qualify for administering the other sacrament. But where has the Master said that some of his servants are authorized to officiate in the one ordinance, and not qualified for the other? A distinction of this kind, in the lawful administration of the sacraments, is very well in Popery, with her “blasphemous fable” of “the body, soul and divinity;” but is unworthy of any church emancipated from her thraldom.

gospel, who are called deacons, having received the laying on of hands *but once*, are quite *inferior* to another set of regularly ordained ministers who are called *elders*, having received the laying on of hands *more than once*. If the distinction of “order” consists in this, that two ordinations are better than one, then three, four and five, by the same reasoning, would be better still; and thus may the humble deacon of Methodism gradually ascend in the numerical scale, until he shall seat himself in the chair of St. Peter, and nobody knows how far above Pontifex Maximus himself.\*

2. With regard to the “orders” of bishop and elder, these names are uniformly used in the New Testament as convertible terms, *the one or the other being employed just as convenient to the writer*. And what is much more conclusive, the very same *character* and *powers* are ascribed to elders as to bishops, thus proving that they are the same, not different orders of ministers. In proof of these positions we cite Acts 20:17-28. “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.” “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” (or bishops). The very same persons are denominated by the inspired Apostle, bishops and elders, and that within a few sentences. Philip. 1:1. “The bishops and deacons” of Philippi are addressed. Titus 1:5, 7. “For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* in every city—for a **BISHOP** must be blameless,” &c.; where, besides the manifest fact that Paul’s elders were the same with Paul’s

\* A few illustrations of the practice in the primitive church may not be out of place. Origen tells us—“The deacons were appointed to preside over the tables of the church, as we are taught in the Acts of the Apostles.” Ambrose in the fourth century says—“The deacons ordinarily were not authorized to preach.” Jerome calls the deacon, “a minister of tables and widows.” And the sixth general Council of Constantinople decided that “the scriptural deacons were no other than overseers of the poor, and that such was the opinion of the ancient fathers.”—(Dr. Miller.)

bishops, we have here, as in the previous cases, proof beyond controversy, that in apostolic times several bishops such as the New Testament sanctions, were accustomed to reside in a single city. Titus is directed to ordain a number of them *in every city*. But could these have been such bishops as Methodism “*consecrates*,” of whose employment a great part seems to be “to travel at large among the people,” and who cannot in any instance cease “to travel through the connexion at large” without permission of the General Conference, under the penalty of being deprived of their office? 1 Peter 1:1, 2. “The elders which are among you I exhort—feed the flock of God—*taking the oversight thereof*,” or, as the word in the original signifies, “exercising the office and performing the duties of a bishop.” Whether Paul and Peter thought it needful, when about to confer the office of a scriptural bishop, *first*, to ordain the man a deacon; *secondly*, to ordain him an elder; and *thirdly* and *lastly*, to “*consecrate*” him a bishop, we leave the candid reader to judge. We rather opine they were better instructed by Him, who, when the disciples strove which should be the *greatest*, set a little child in the midst, and bade them take him for a pattern of true greatness; and who hath left on record the memorable sentence: “The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, *but it shall not be so among you*.” And as regards the judgment of Wesley, he expressly asserts, “Lord King’s account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and elders *are the same order*.”

The evidence against Episcopacy is so conclusive that Watson affirms, “The argument drawn by the Presbyterians from the promiscuous use of these terms (bishop and elder) in the New Testament is incontrovertible.” (Vol. ii. p. 575.) And even Dr. Bangs, who, in the Appendix to Buck’s Theological Dictionary, has spoken so largely of the “*three orders*” and “the duties peculiar to each,” elsewhere admits that “if any choose to say that we acknowledge *two orders only*, and a su-

erior minister possessing a *delegated jurisdiction*, &c. he *has my full consent.*" Here then we have a plain acknowledgment that the office of the Methodist bishop is of *human origin*—that it is superior to that of elder solely by the consent and delegation of man. Of course, all that is left to Methodist Episcopacy is a mere *human invention*. And the "divers orders" of the ministry appointed by "Almighty God" are reduced to two, deacons and elders! Whether the number might not be still further reduced, must be decided by those who have examined the evidence of the ministerial character of the New Testament deacons.

It is an inquiry also of much interest, When did Methodist Episcopacy arise? The Scriptures know nothing about it—from what causes did it originate? The opinion of Wesley upon the subject of its introduction may be learned from a letter to Mr. Asbury, then associated with Dr. Coke in the bishopric of America, under date of 1788. He said: "There is a wide difference between the relation wherein you stand to the American Methodists, and the relation wherein I stand to all the Methodists. \* \* \* But in one point I am a little afraid both the Doctor and yourself differ from me. I study to be little, you study to be great. I creep, you strut along. I found a school, you a college—nay, call it by your own names. \* \* \* One instance of your greatness has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought. Men may call me a knave, a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content. But they shall never, by my consent, call me a bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this."

It is obvious from the foregoing extract, that the flattering title which chimes so sweetly in the ear of ambitious ecclesiastics, was at that time just beginning to be employed in the Methodist church. And whether it is probable that a man of Wesley's strong sense would make all this ado about a

mere *name*, if there had not been connected with it much of the arrogant assumption of the office, we submit to the decision of candor.

Both Scripture and Wesley refuse their countenance to Methodist Episcopacy. How then did it originate? We reply, from the love of title and distinction which is native in the human heart. It appears that Mr. Wesley first appointed Dr. Coke, who was directed to appoint Mr. Asbury, *superintendent* of the Methodist churches in America, but this humble title did not long satisfy these reverend gentlemen. In four or five years, they began to employ the term *bishop* in the minutes of conference; and at this time it was that Wesley wrote the letter we have quoted above, expressing his indignation and abhorrence of the substitution. It seems, moreover, that at least one of these gentlemen had some occasional misgivings respecting the validity of his episcopal ordination. In 1804, Dr. Coke applied to Bishop White of the Protestant Episcopal church, to have himself and others admitted to the episcopacy; thus acknowledging his claim to the office to be utterly destitute of foundation. He tells Bishop White "that Mr. Wesley had invested him with episcopal authority, so far as he had a right to do so;" but as Wesley never held higher than the priest's office in the Church of England, it is plain that Coke had as good a right to ordain to the episcopal office as Wesley!

These facts prepare us to appreciate the statement of the "Origin of the Methodist Episcopal Church," prefixed to her "Discipline." "Mr. Wesley," they tell us, "*preferring the episcopal mode of church government to any other*, in 1784 solemnly set apart Thomas Coke for the episcopal office"—a priest ordaining a bishop—"that Mr. Wesley delivered to Dr. Coke letters of episcopal orders, and directed him to set apart Francis Asbury to the office of a bishop after arriving in America." In consequence of which, Mr. Asbury appears

to have been hurried through the probationary degrees of deacon and elder; or, in the language of Dr. Bangs (Appendix to Buck), “was ordained by Dr. Coke, *first* to the office of deacon, *then* elder, and *then* superintendent or bishop;” and all, it seems, at the same meeting of conference! And last, not least, we are told that “the general conference did unanimously receive the said Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as their bishops, *being fully satisfied of the validity of their episcopal ordination!*”

In this derivation of the succession of the episcopate, the preachers will find much scope for the exercise of *faith*. They must *believe* that Priest Wesley consecrated Bishop Coke, imparted an authority he did not possess. They must *believe* that by this means Thomas Coke became invested with all the rights, titles and appurtenances of a bishop, although the way Methodist bishops are now “constituted” is quite different. They must *believe*, nevertheless, that both inventions for making a bishop are right—that Thomas Coke was well and truly made a bishop by Mr. Wesley, *only four years* before he wrote, “call me knave, fool, rascal, scoundrel, but never call me bishop;” and they must *believe* that the letter (of which this is an extract) was directed (in 1788) to Mr. Asbury, and conveyed a most pungent reproof for permitting himself to be clothed with an office, and addressed by a title, which Mr. Wesley himself, only four years previously (1784) had *expressly intended* for him; and for this purpose Priest Wesley had consecrated Bishop Coke, and Bishop Coke was to consecrate Bishop Asbury. (See Discip. M. E. Church.)

But it were well if this singular affair terminated here. There is a much more serious aspect of the affair. Bishops, elders and deacons, have seated themselves in the high places of the church; and it becomes an inquiry of much importance—How have they disposed of the laity? We reply—they are so disposed of as to be relieved of the whole burden of saying or doing any thing in the secular or spiritual

administration. All they have to do is to contribute liberally and submit implicitly to the dictation of their superiors. The preachers have legislated the whole power over the temporal and spiritual concerns of the church *out of* the people's hands, and *into* their own. This Wesley candidly avowed as his original intention. In a letter to I. Mason, dated near London, January 13, 1790, "As long," says he, "as I live, the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We have not, and never had any such custom. *We are no republicans, and never intend to be.* It would be better for those that are so minded to go quietly away." Accordingly, when, in 1797, the people in some parts of England began to take the alarm, and petitioned in large numbers, "*that they might have a voice in the formation of their own laws, the choice of their own officers, and the distribution of their own property*" (see Buck's Theological Dictionary, art. Methodists), the love of power conquered the sense of right, and these petitioners were denied those privileges, which both reason and Scripture teach every man are the fundamental principles of all freedom, civil as well as religious. In this country, too, the free spirit of our civil government has extended its reforming hand to the oppressions of religious tyranny. A large and respectable body of Methodists have begun to feel and act like Christian freemen. The rights and privileges for which they have been contending, are the same for which their brethren in England petitioned in 1797. And how have their efforts toward emancipation been received? Just as might have been expected from a clerical aristocracy which holds all the power in its own hands, and wields the sword of discipline agreeably to its sovereign pleasure. The advocates of the people's rights were excommunicated—*excommunicated* for insisting upon those very rights in ecclesiastical matters, for which, in state policy, our fathers fought and bled in the great revolutionary struggle, viz. "*A voice in*

*making their own laws, electing their own rulers, and distributing their own property."*

To these statements it has been replied, "that as every preacher, before he can be admitted by the conference, must be recommended by the laity, and as the conference cannot move a single step toward his admission, without such recommendation, it follows that the laity are the origin and source of all power in the church." But Dr. Bangs, in the Appendix to Buck, informs us that "a person thinking himself moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel, *first* makes known his views and exercises to the preacher having charge of the circuit, who, if *he considers the applicant a fit person (here is the origin of all power)*, grants him license to exhort," &c. Besides, if it were correct that the laity must recommend the candidate to the Conference before he can be received, it would be a marvelous proof of their holding all the power in their hands, because, forsooth, a man who wishes to turn preacher, must get a few of his friends to recommend him! The quarterly conferences, it is further said, are composed partly of laymen; and these bodies are the door of entrance to the ministry, &c. But these laymen, according to Dr. Bangs, "are the *stewards, leaders and exhorters*" of the circuit, appointed directly or indirectly by the preachers, and of course are completely under the control of their originators.

Indeed, we may fearlessly affirm that there is not a form of church government on earth (the Papacy excepted), so radically opposed to republicanism as Methodism. The legislative, executive and judicial powers are all placed in the hands of a privileged aristocracy—the preachers; and at their sovereign nod, both men and money are disposed of, to promote whatever purposes piety, ambition, proselytism, or whim, may dictate.

In proof of these statements, the Rev. Professor S. S. Schmucker, of the Lutheran church, himself a decided Arminian, has collected from the "Discipline" the following particulars of this clerical usurpation :

1. "*The exclusive right of suffrage* in the election of delegates to the general conference and of bishops." A thing unknown in any other Protestant church.

2. "*Exclusive eligibility both to the annual and general conferences.*" In all other Protestant churches, laymen are eligible to the church courts.

3. "*The exclusive unlimited power to legislate* for the whole church in matters of doctrine, discipline, and forms of worship and minor regulations." The traveling preachers can change and reverse whenever they please, every item of doctrine,\* discipline and forms of worship; and no layman, nor even local preacher, can have a word to say in it.

4. "*The exclusive right to sit in judgment* on the moral conduct of traveling preachers." In other churches such trials are conducted by laymen and ministers jointly.

5. "*The exclusive right* of appointing all committees for the trial of lay members, without the power on the part of the accused to challenge any member of such committee, though he could prove him his bitterest enemy.

6. "*The exclusive right* to conduct and control the book concern, and appropriate its extensive profits exclusively to their own benefit.

7. "*The exclusive right of eligibility* to the editorship of the periodicals of the Methodist church: local preachers and laymen are excluded by the Discipline.

8. "*The exclusive right* to hold and control all the Method-

\* It may perhaps be questioned, whether the *preachers* have power, according to the Discipline, to change the *doctrines* of the Methodist church. It is admitted that among the provisions for altering and amending the Book of Discipline, it is said, "*excepting the first article,*" which relates to doctrine. But cannot the same power which inserted that *exception* strike it out? Cannot a *majority* of the General Conference *erase* that *exception*, whenever they please? The way is then open to abolish every *doctrine* of the system, and substitute in its stead any other *ism* which pleases them best. The people are therefore *absolutely dependent* upon the preachers, whether the Methodist Episcopal church is Universalist, Socinian, or Popish, in her doctrinal testimony!

dist churches and parsonages, deeded according to the Discipline—to say who shall and who shall not occupy them, without consulting the wishes of the laity who paid for them. Even the trustees are nominated *exclusively* by the traveling preachers. In every other Protestant church in the land, each congregation has control of its own parsonage and church property.

9. “*The exclusive right* to fix their own salary, that is, the amount to which they may retain possession of their collections, and receive dividends from the several funds. In every other church, the people decide for themselves what sum they will allow their minister.

10. “*The exclusive right* of their bishops to determine what minister each congregation shall have, without consulting the wishes of the people. In all other churches of our land, the congregation invites the person they think best suited to them.

11. “*An entire irresponsibility to the people* for all their acts, legislative, judicial and executive, and for the distribution of the extensive funds possessed by them; no power on earth can call them to account.” Thus far Dr. Schmucker. We are now prepared to understand Dr. Bangs, when he asserts in his “Vindication”—“Every part of our government is elective.” But who are the voters? *The reverend clergy.* And is not the Pope *elected by his reverend cardinals?*

In concluding this Letter, we remark, that some difference of opinion appears to exist among the leaders of Methodist Episcopacy. Messrs. Bangs and Emory say, “their church government is in *fact and name episcopal*;” and Dr. Emory adds: “In whatever sense distinct ordinations constitute distinct ORDERS, in the *same sense* Mr. Wesley certainly intended that we should have *three orders*.” But Dr. Bond, senior, affirms that “the episcopacy is NOT a distinct *ministerial order*, but only a superior *office*; and that is the light in which it has always been considered.” Now, in the language of Dr. Mus-

grave, "if nothing more is meant by their distinct 'episcopal' ordination, than the giving of the power of general *superintendence*, why talk about their *three orders*, and their due '*order and succession!*'?"—If men will be guilty of such nonsense, they must expect to be laughed at for their simplicity; and by none more heartily than Episcopalianists themselves, whose forms they so absurdly imitate."

As to the fact that the preachers have all ecclesiastical power, executive, legislative and judicial, in their own hands, it is "a bad eminence" which all right-thinking men should shun, for their own sakes, as well as for the liberty and security of the laity.

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## LETTER XVII.

PREACHER USURPATIONS—CONTROL OF PROPERTY—AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE "THE WORK OF THE DEVIL."

REV. SIR—In the list of clerical exactions stated by Prof. Schmucker, there is one item that requires a separate consideration :

### XII. THE DIFFICULTIES OF EPISCOPAL METHODISM, IN RELATION TO CERTAIN RIGHTS OF PROPERTY.

In all other denominations, with the single exception of Popery, when a congregation build a house of worship, it is *their own* to all intents and purposes. Not so, however, in Methodist Episcopacy; for the preachers require all such valuable interests *to be deeded to them* and placed entirely beyond the control of the original owners. It is true the form of deed in the Discipline (p. 176) conveys the property to trustees in the first instance—but mark! It is "in trust that they shall build a house or place of worship for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, according to the rules and discipline which, from time

*to time, may be agreed on and adopted by the PREACHERS of said church."* "And in further trust that they shall at all times permit such preachers" "to preach and expound God's holy word therein," &c. &c. The property, then, is for *the use of the people* according to *the rules adopted by the preachers*, and they can have the use of it no longer than they quietly submit to those rules, however unjust or oppressive they may be. All that is necessary, therefore, to enable an avaricious priesthood to take quiet possession of the immense and accumulating property of the Methodist Episcopal church, is to enact rules *sufficiently oppressive* to force away the people, and *the whole wealth of the church is theirs, deeded and confirmed to them forever.*

In defense of this feature of the system, it has been said, that if "the preachers cease to be Methodists, they have no right to the use of the meeting houses, and *the same is true of the members.*" But is it true that any conference of preachers *have the right* to make laws, the purport of which is—"If you, the people, exercise your rights of conscience, and '*cease to be Methodists,*' you must leave your property *in our hands—it is yours no longer?*" Is this toleration or religious liberty? Who gives the preachers a right to impose a tax of this kind upon as many of their people as become tired of their ecclesiastical supervision? The law of God will regard property thus obtained as "*the wages of unrighteousness.*"

It is plain, therefore, that if a Methodist Episcopal congregation *unanimously* resolve to unite with another denomination of Christians, say the Protestant Methodists, they are obliged to surrender their house of worship, to forsake the temple which their labors and wealth had reared for their accommodation, to leave all in the hands of Methodist Episcopal *preachers*, and commence anew from the foundation. They cannot touch a cent of it. The property is theirs no longer than they continue obedient and faithful servants of

the preachers, and submit to be governed by *their rules*. And if every Methodist congregation in the land were successively to renounce the system, *unanimously* renounce it, they could not keep possession of a cent of their property—it must lie in the hands of the preachers to be disposed of according to their “*rules*.” A congregation may wish to make sale of the house they have erected out of their own funds: but no! they dare not. And even when, in case of debt, the trustees are authorized to sell the property to pay it, the surplus is deposited (not in the hands of the trustees, or returned to those who are its lawful owners, but) “*in the hands of the steward, to be at the disposal of the next annual conference*”—it is added, indeed, “*for the use of said society*”—as much as to say, “*we, the preachers, think you, the rightful owners, do not know what use to make of your money—we will kindly relieve you of the burden of it.*” To allege that the preachers of the Methodist Episcopal church will always be men of too much probity and uprightness to abuse the power placed in their hands, is only to show the extreme credulity of the objector. All history testifies that the direct method to corrupt the best of men, is to place at their disposal unlimited and uncontrolled power, whether of wealth, or any other kind of influence. Mankind have learned an impressive lesson of the working of such a system, from the corruptions and abominations of the Papal hierarchy, possessing, as they do, and controlling millions of property wrung from the small earnings of poverty, by the hard hand of superstition and falsehood. Let the myriads of lazy, worthless priests, monks, and other “*religious*,” who fatten on these spoils, put Protestants on their guard. *Rome* spiritual, as well as *Rome* political, was not built in a day. Beware of the *beginnings* of evil, which are as the letting out of water. And the example of Protestant England is scarcely less admonitory—her pampered archbishops, bishops and other clergy, having saddled their rich *benefices* upon a people who in large part reject with contempt

their spiritual ministrations. And we should also recollect that *seventeen* years ago (1843) the meeting houses and parsonages under control of the preachers, were estimated at *three millions eight hundred thousand dollars*—and that besides these, they had their “*chartered fund*,” their “*book concern*,” their *magazines*, weekly papers, &c. It was therefore a low estimate which placed the whole, even *then*, at from *four to five millions of dollars*. From the increase of the body, no less than from the common rise of the value of property, these various sources of income may reasonably be estimated *now*, at not less than *ten millions of dollars*. It cannot be denied that all these funds are under the control of the preachers, and the proceeds are for the exclusive use of themselves and their families—as will be fully proved in a future Letter. On the first of January, 1842, *the net capital* of the “*Book Concern*” was more than \$600,000; and the *net profits* for that year were nearly \$40,000. As Dr. Musgrave well remarks—“It is idle to say that these preachers are pious men and will not abuse their power. We know they are but men, and by their own showing, the best of them may ‘fall from grace.’ ”

The ultimate tendencies of a system such as we have been examining, present to the inquisitive mind a melancholy prospect. The experience of all Popish countries proves, that the most direct method of enslaving any people in a political point of view, is, to take from them their independence in religion. Bring them to suffer the privilege and right of self-government in religion to pass into the hands of others—persuade them to surrender the right of thinking and acting like Christian freemen, and you have a people prepared, on the first opportunity, to submit *the trouble* of political rule to any aspiring demagogue who may volunteer his services. The habit of implicit submission to the dictation of others, is soon formed; and what was at first esteemed a precious right, will soon come to be regarded as an oppressive burden.

The spirit of lofty independence will be broken, and the man will be merged in the abject slave. The British monarch, James I. had some skill in this matter. When assigning a reason for wishing to put down Presbytery and elevate Episcopacy, he delivered the royal maxim—"no bishop, no king"—he uttered a sentiment which has been repeated a thousand times as a favorite and acknowledged principle, by the enemies of civil and religious liberty. So also, a writer in the London Quarterly Review, a work devoted to the interests of episcopacy and toryism, uses the following strong language: "Certain it is, that *monarchy* and *episcopacy* are much more nearly connected than writers of *bad faith* or *little reflection* have sought to persuade mankind." "There is an insensible, but natural inclination toward *democracy*," says the same writer, "which arises from the principles of a *popular church government*."<sup>\*</sup> On the other hand, the natural alliance between a *popular church government* and civil liberty, has been alternately the theme of praise from its friends, and of reproach from its enemies, from time immemorial. Clarendon and Hume acknowledge it in all the bitterness of their hostility.

But it has been replied, that the traveling preachers cannot righteously be charged with being a clerical aristocracy, because "they have left in the hands of the laity the all-important power of withholding every cent of pecuniary support." And Dr. Bangs, in his "Vindication," chap. 10, on "the privileges of members of our church," states the *third* to be, that "no member can be censured for not contributing to the support of the ministry." Is it indeed so? On page

\* The unhappy Charles, during his conflicts with the Parliament, was urged to give his consent to abolish Episcopacy. This he refused, because, among other things, Episcopacy was *more friendly to monarchy than Presbytery*. "Show me," said he, "any precedent where *presbyterian* government and regal were together, *without perpetual rebellions*." "And it cannot be otherwise, for the ground of their doctrine is anti-monarchical." "There was not a wiser man since Solomon, than he who said, 'No bishop, no king.'"

185 of the Book of Discipline, is a rule requiring "*weekly class collections* wher ever it is practicable," to meet the allowances to the preachers, &c. And on page 98 they say, that in "cases of neglect of duties of *any kind*, or disobedience to *the order and discipline* of the church," the offender is on the *third offense* to be "*cut off*" or excommunicated. Now is it a duty of "*any kind*," or any part of the "*order and discipline*" to contribute at the class collections? Then, on the third instance of neglect to pay the preacher, all orthodox Methodists enjoy the precious privilege of being regularly excluded from the church! The trouble of making and executing laws for the government of the brethren is not to go unrewarded—the laborer is worthy of his hire. The preachers bear the burden of exclusive legislation—they relieve the people of all part and lot in that matter. Is it not right that they should be punished, if they refuse to be taxed for these inestimable "privileges?"

In the light of these facts we are prepared to appreciate the zeal with which, some years since, Methodist preachers reëchoed the hue and cry of infidels, that the civil and religious freedom of the country was in danger from Presbyterianism. Many persons will remember the time and circumstances of this disgraceful affair. Their great paper, the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, published an article entitled, "*Murder will out*," professing to discover to the world some dreadful conspiracy which the Presbyterians were plotting against the civil and religious liberties of the country—designing to unite the Presbyterian church with the civil government, and hold the posts of honor and emolument in their own hands. Of course their clergy were to reap the rich rewards of the successful execution of this scheme! Twenty or thirty thousand copies of this infidel publication immediately issued from New York, and the circuit riders were flying from one end of the land to the other, bearing the important news. Their pulpits and even the day of rest were

employed to trumpet the wonderful discovery! "I do believe," said one of these ardent patriots, "they are secretly combining to get their religion established; and I would have no hesitancy in advancing the above ideas and language from the pulpit." (Letter of a circuit rider, dated August 5, 1829.)

Intelligent men of all classes will not soon forget that this crusade was preached by the very men whose form of ecclesiastical government is in direct contrast with our republican institutions; and whose spiritual forefathers were those preachers who, whilst Dr. Witherspoon and other Presbyterians, both ministers and laity (with perhaps no exception), were nobly stemming the tide of oppression, basely fled from the land of their adoption, and consigned her sons to the sword of tyranny, the doom of rebels. "During the revolutionary war," says Dr. Bangs, "all the preachers, except Mr. Asbury,\* returned to their native land." Yes, they loved "their native land" too well to find rest to the sole of their foot in a country where grinding oppression had roused the spirit of independence, and *tories* had fallen into disrepute. "All the Methodists there," says Wesley, "were firm for the government (that is, *were all tories*), and on that account were persecuted by the *rebels*." Wesley's Works, vol. iii. p. 411.

Such then, is the sort of men who are so jealous for our liberties and so prompt to detect and expose Presbyterian plots for their overthrow! Nor should it be forgotten, that these patriotic preachers, who, in the language of the founder of their system, "*are no republicans* (in ecclesiastical matters) *and never intend to be*," are in the *constant practice* of

\* Mr. Asbury concealed himself among the *tories* of the State of Delaware. And yet when the storm had scarce blown over, their *patriotism* bursts into a blaze; and *bishops* Coke and Asbury present an address to General Washington, in which they speak of "our civil and religious liberties transmitted to us by the providence of God and the glorious revolution!" And "*the most excellent constitution of these States*, at present the *admiration of the world*, and its great *exemplar for imitation!*!" (See Arminian Magazine, vol. i. p. 284.)

circulating, by means of their book concern, sentiments which are *high tory* and *treasonable*. The following passages from the third volume of Wesley's Sermons, pp. 406, 408, will illustrate our meaning—"Thus," says he, "we have observed each of these wheels apart—on the one hand, trade, wealth, luxury, sloth and wantonness, spreading far and wide through the American provinces; on the other, *the spirit of independency* diffusing itself from north to south. Let us observe how the wise and gracious providence of God uses one to check the other, and even employs (if so strong an expression may be allowed) *Satan to cast out Satan*. Probably that subtle spirit (the devil) hoped by adding to all *those other vices* the *spirit of independency*, to have overturned the whole work of God, as well as the British government in North America." So it seems that independence and the overthrow of the British government in this country, were *the works of the devil!* Again: "The spirit of independence which our poet so justly terms 'the glorious fault of angels and of gods' (that is in plain terms, of devils), the same which so many call *liberty*, is overruled by the justice and mercy of God." This is truly a bright picture of our glorious revolution, and of the principal actors in its trying scenes. Their love of liberty was, after all, only "the glorious fault of devils!"

These statements are abundantly confirmed by Southey, in his Life of Wesley. He argued, we are told, against the principle that representation should accompany taxation, and asserted that the people had a right to nothing but *protection*; that the tea tax was legal and reasonable, and that the war of the Revolution was of Puritan origin. He alleged that the greatest degree of liberty was to be enjoyed under a monarchy. His opposition to our war of independence was most intense. He said of it, I am "pleading the cause of my king and country, yea, of every country;" "pleading against those principles that naturally tend to *anarchy and confusion*." And he earnestly endeavored to enlist the whole

Methodist body against the American cause. In a letter dated 1782, he says: "Two or three years ago, when the kingdom was in great danger, I made an offer to the government of raising men;" thus it was owing to the moderation of the British government, more than to the principles of Methodism, that its leader did not take his spiritual power into the work of recruiting sergeant for the British army, to raise men among Methodists for the butchery of our fathers.

We could cover with the mantle of charity the weakness and errors of John Wesley, a British subject and a staunch royalist; but when we behold these self-constituted guardians of our liberties, these zealous watchmen, eager to sound the alarm of approaching danger from the ambitious designs of Presbyterians — when we find these incorruptible patriots sending out, as on the wings of the four winds of heaven, thousands and tens of thousands of copies of a work, which breathes the very spirit of *toryism* and *treason*, it is difficult to find a covering wide enough to hide their guilt and shame.

Further: If the overthrow of the British power and the establishment of American independence, were the WORKS OF THE DEVIL, as Wesley affirms, and the preachers print and publish to the world, must they not feel themselves bound to *destroy* "the works of the devil?" Are we then to understand that the Methodist hierarchy is leagued together to *overthrow our republican institutions?* And are we further to understand that the charge against Presbyterianism of "secretly combining" against the liberties of the country, was only a piece of generalship, a skillful diversion in favor of their own deep conspiracy!!

But if the preachers really disapprove of ascribing American independence to the agency of the devil, why do they print and publish, and widely circulate such sentiments? "Because," it is replied, "we do not choose to *mutilate the volumes!*" To *mutilate* the volumes! To mutilate is "*to deprive of some essential part.*" And are those "essential

parts" of a volume of sermons, which ascribe our liberty and independence to the devil! We should like to inquire whether the preachers regard the *tory* and *treasonable* sentiments uttered by Wesley as true or false? If they say they are *true*, then do they confess themselves as staunch *tories* as ever their spiritual forefathers were. If they say they are *false*, then we ask, would it *mutilate* a volume of sermons to omit its *falsehood*? Or do these preachers and publishers regard falsehood as an "*essential part*" of a volume of sermons? But are these gentlemen always so excessively scrupulous in the matter of mutilating volumes? Do they not publish the works of Calvinistic authors, retaining their names, whilst every shred of the peculiarities of Calvinism is eviscerated and suppressed? Or is it only Arminian toryism that must not be mutilated?

We cannot but hope that the foregoing statement of facts will henceforth impose silence on the preachers in regard to the *dark designs* of Presbyterians. And if they should commence the work of "*mutilation*," we would suggest the following additional passages as not unworthy of their attention, along with the extracts from the sermons, viz. "The supposition that *the people* are the origin of power, is every way indefensible." "You (Americans) profess to be contending for liberty, but *it is a vain, empty profession*," &c. But the best is yet to come. "*No governments under heaven are so DESPOTIC as the REPUBLICAN*: no subjects are governed in so arbitrary a manner as those of a commonwealth." "*Should any man talk or write of the Dutch government as every cobbler does of the English*, he would be laid in irons before he knew where he was. And woe be to him. *REPUBLICS SHOW NO MERCY*." These tory sentiments are scattered among the families of this republic, as the opinions of a man who, they are taught to believe, was only not infallible. See Works of Wesley, vol. iii. pp. 130-134.

In striking contrast with this singular medley of Methodist

Episcopacy, let us hear the venerable Dr. Miller describe the episcopacy of the New Testament and of good sense :

“ We suppose,” remarks Dr. M. “ that there is, properly speaking, but *one order* of gospel ministers ; that every regular pastor of a congregation is a scriptural *bishop* ; or that every presbyter who has been set apart, ‘*by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*’ (1 Tim. 4 : 14), who has the pastoral charge of a particular church, is, to all intents and purposes, *a bishop* ; having a right, in company with others, his equals, to ordain and to perform every service pertaining to the episcopal office. We suppose that there are, indeed, two other classes of church officers, viz. *ruling elders* and *deacons* ; but that neither of these are authorized to labor in word and doctrine, or to administer the Christian sacraments. We suppose there is a plain distinction made in Scripture between *elders* who only *rule*, and elders who also ‘*labor in word and doctrine*.’ 1 Tim. 5 : 17.

“ Our judicatories, from the highest to the lowest, are all made up of *laymen* as well as clergymen ; and in all of them, excepting the highest, if the laity exercise their rights, there will be a larger number of the *former* than of the *latter* ; and in the highest judicatory, an equal number. This, of course, gives to the laity of our communion constant and intimate access to all our plans and measures, and all the opportunity that can be desired to exercise their full share of power in controlling those measures.. The people cannot be oppressed, unless they conspire to oppress themselves !” (Letter to a gentleman of Baltimore, p. 72.) This conclusive reasoning would doubtless lack most of its force, if the *laymen*, of whom Dr. M. speaks, were, like the “class-leaders, stewards, trustees and exhorters” of Methodism, indebted *exclusively* to the preachers for their appointment or nomination : but this is so far from being the fact, that the laymen who participate in all the councils of Presbyterianism, are the representatives of the congregations, chosen by a majority of votes, and

delegated by their own deliberate, uncontrolled choice and designation, to this special duty. This is literally the fact in *every instance*, in regard to the three lower forms of judicatory; and *may* be literally true of their appointment to the highest, whenever the laity exercise their constitutional right to have a majority in the presbyteries which elect the delegates.

But the inquiry may here arise—Is there any scriptural warrant for a system of church government so thoroughly republican as this? Does the word of God authorize the commitment of ecclesiastical power so entirely into the hands of the people? In reply, we refer to the record of the appointment of deacons, in the 6th chapter of Acts. Let the inquirer open his Bible and read—“The twelve called the *multitude of the disciples* unto them and said: Brethren, *look ye* out among you seven men, whom we may appoint over this business. And the saying pleased *the whole multitude*, and **THEY CHOSE** Stephen and Philip,” &c. (Not the preachers, nor bishops, nor even the *Apostles chose* them; not even inspired Apostles would venture to take the right of election out of the hands of the people.) “Whom,” continues the record, “**THEY** set before the Apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” Can any thing be more evident than that the first deacons were elected by the voice of the people, or by “*the whole multitude of the disciples?*” Now turn to the 32d page of the Methodist Book of Discipline—“How is a traveling deacon constituted?” “By the election”—of the people? of the *whole multitude of the disciples?* No! but “*of the majority of the yearly conference,*” which is composed exclusively of *preachers*; not a solitary layman holding a seat among them. The unscriptural character of this feature of the system must therefore be obvious to all. In the days of the Apostles, the people chose their own deacons, but Methodism has ventured to *improve* upon the primitive plan, and her preachers exercise a power which Apostles did not dare to assume.

Again, we refer the reader to the 15th chapter of Acts, for further proof of scriptural republicanism: “Certain men which came down from Judea taught *the brethren*—‘Except ye be circumcised,’ &c. They (the brethren) determined that Paul and Barnabas and *certain other of them* (the brethren) should go up to Jerusalem—they were received of *the church*, and of the Apostles and elders—and the Apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter. Then pleased it the Apostles and elders, *with the whole church*, to send chosen men of their own company—the Apostles, elders, *and brethren*, send greeting—it seemed good unto *us* (the Apostles, elders, and brethren), being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you,” &c. If these passages do not prove the fact, that under the direction of inspired Apostles, THE PEOPLE did participate in the deliberations and legislative acts of the Synod of Jerusalem—if they do not determine the *Divine right* of private members of the church to a share in its government, it is difficult to say what evidence would suffice. But suppose these things had been transacted by a Methodist conference, annual or general. How would it have read? The *reverend traveling preachers* (although the “*brethren*” had not “*chosen*” one of them “*to go up*” to conference,) came together for to consider of this matter. Then pleased it the traveling preachers to exclude from their conference all local preachers, to allow them no seat nor vote in their meeting. And when there had been much disputing, a certain bishop, surnamed Peter, rose up, and addressed *the preachers*. “Then *all the multitude*” (of *the preachers*) kept silence and gave audience—and after he had held his peace, bishop James delivered a speech to the “*whole multitude*” of *preachers*. Then pleased it the reverend traveling preachers, “*with the whole church*” of traveling preachers, to send chosen men to Antioch. And they wrote letters—“The traveling preachers, with ‘*the brethren*,’ who are also *traveling preachers*, send greeting—It seemed good unto *us*,

*the traveling preachers," &c. &c.* Now in this portrait we have merely supposed the Apostles to have been good Methodists—that they excluded all laymen and local preachers from a seat and vote in their councils, and after having been *self-appointed to conference*, that they took the whole business of legislation out of the hands of the people. We have also substituted the words “traveling preachers” in the place of “the brethren,” “all the multitude,” “the whole church,” &c. as they occur in the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It would be manifestly absurd to speak of “all the multitude,” “the whole church,” “the brethren,” as being present, “giving audience,” and uniting in the business of legislation, in a Methodist conference. In this mirror, then, the candid inquirer may see at one view, the republicanism of Scripture, and the aristocracy of Methodism. Nor will he feel surprise to find Dr. Bangs in his “Vindication,” express his fears for a “*ministry under the control and at the mercy of the people.*” p. 158. Doubtless Dr. B. thinks it much safer to have the *people under the control and at the mercy of the preachers!*

Such, then, in the language of another, is Episcopal Methodism—an anomaly in the midst of our free institutions. Her mother, the Protestant Episcopal church, it is well known, admits the principle of lay representation. So that excepting her grandmother of Rome, she is the only church in America that is not blessed with “the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”

## LETTER XVIII.

## CLERICAL USURPATIONS—PREACHERS FIX THEIR OWN SALARIES, AND PROVIDE FOR THEIR PAYMENT.

REV. SIR—The impression is often made by the agents of your system that whilst the ministers of other denominations are abundantly paid for their labors, the Methodist preachers not only receive no pecuniary compensation, but indignantly spurn the thought, as degrading them to a level with hireling priests. Whether this impression is *intentionally* left upon the minds of the people, we know not; we only state the fact. We believe, however, that a careful examination will clearly establish the truth, that your preachers have *provided for themselves* more liberally than *the people* have provided for the ministry of any other branch of the American church. In this they have only practiced upon the principle avowed by the founder of their system. “I know,” says Wesley (Works, vol. i. p. 78), “the spiritual laborer is worthy of his reward; and that if we sow to our flock spiritual things, it is meet that we reap of their carnal things: I do not therefore blame, no, not *in any degree*, a minister’s taking a yearly salary.”

XIII. THE DIFFICULTIES OF METHODIST EPISCOPACY—  
PREACHERS FIX THEIR OWN SALARIES, AND PROVIDE FOR THEIR LIBERAL PAYMENT.

The following items they have enacted into *laws* for remunerating the traveling ministry for their toils:

I. “The annual allowance of the traveling preachers shall be two hundred dollars, and *their traveling expenses*.

II. Each child of a traveling preacher shall be allowed sixteen dollars annually to the age of seven years; and twenty-four dollars annually from seven to fourteen. And those preachers whose wives are dead, shall be allowed for

each child a sum sufficient to pay the board of such child or children for the above term of years. Nevertheless, this rule shall not apply to the children of preachers whose families are provided for by other means, in their circuits respectively.

III. The allowance of superannuated, worn-out, and supernumerary preachers, shall be two hundred dollars annually.

IV. The annual allowance of their widows shall be one hundred dollars.

V. Their orphans shall be allowed the same sums respectively which are allowed to the children of living preachers. And on the death of a preacher, leaving a child or children without so much of worldly goods as should be necessary to his, or her, or their support, the annual conference shall raise a yearly sum for the subsistence and education of such orphan child or children until he, she or they shall be fourteen years of age."

Again: "It shall be the duty of said committee or one appointed for that purpose, to make an estimate of the amount necessary to furnish fuel and table expenses for the family or families of preachers stationed with them, and the stewards shall provide by such means as they may devise, to meet such expenses, in money or otherwise."

Again: "It is recommended by the general conference to the traveling preachers, to advise our friends in general, to purchase a lot of ground in each circuit, and to build a preacher's house thereon, and to furnish it with at least the heavy furniture." "The general conference recommend to all the circuits (if not able to build a preacher's house), to rent a house for the married preacher and his family, and that the annual conferences do assist to make up the rents of such houses as far as they can, when the circuits cannot do it."

Thus far the Discipline. We will take an average case, say a preacher with wife and five children, two above and three under seven years:

Annual allowance for himself and wife,	- - - -	\$200 00
Two children above seven, \$24 each,	- - - -	48 00
Three children under seven, \$16 each,	- - - -	48 00
Table expenses, or boarding, at 75 cents each per week, for six persons, omitting the youngest child, and omitting domestics, fuel, &c.	- - - -	283 00
House rent and heavy furniture,	- - - -	55 00
Traveling expenses to conference, &c.	- - - -	30 00
		<hr/>
		\$664 00

This liberal allowance will, of course, increase with the family, and should the preacher become disabled by accident, or sickness, or old age, the allowance is continued to him and his children, even though he should be laid aside in the early part of his ministry; so that for a few years, or weeks, or days' service, he and his family may receive their allowance for half a century. And when he goes to rest from his labors, he has the consolation of knowing that his widow and children will not be cast upon the cold charity of an unfeeling world, but will be provided with a very respectable annual allowance. Well may we inquire with Dr. Schmucker, "What denomination of Christians is there in our land, whose ministers would not gladly accept this provision?"

Nothing but the necessity of defending ourselves against the ungenerous assaults of our adversaries, would constrain us to enter into these minute calculations. Since, however, they have provoked the discussion, we esteem it to be our duty to let the Christian public know the whole truth. It should be remembered, therefore, that the foregoing estimates are made for a region of country where the ordinary salaries of the ministers of other denominations rate from \$400 to \$600—rarely above the latter sum, except in a few instances, in large and expensive villages and their vicinity; and often less than the former amount (\$400). With what shadow of truth or justice, then, are these men denounced by the "preachers," whose allowance by their own Discipline, is considerably larger? This their most zealous advocates are

compelled to admit. The Discipline, moreover, is the handi-work of the preachers exclusively. This sum, therefore (\$660), is the annual compensation which *they have ordained* to be due for their ministerial services. This is the sum they will *receive*, if they can get it, and which they have passed the requisite laws to secure, provided the people will submit to be taxed to this amount. What then becomes of their voluntary poverty? Ought they not to blush for the outcry which they have raised respecting the *large salaries* of the clergy of other branches of the church? Is it fair, is it honest, to indulge in harsh reflections and taunting insinuations against ministers who do not receive, in numberless instances, so large a salary as Methodist preachers have *decreed to be not too large a sum* for a clergyman with a certain family?

We are not sufficiently in possession of the facts to form a detailed estimate for our largest sized towns and cities. The following statements, however, will afford a clew to explain how these matters are managed there. In the trial of an action for *libel* in New York, brought by Azor Hoyt against Rev. Messrs. Waugh, Emory, Bangs and J. Collard, Rev. Dr. Durbin testified as follows: "My salary is *twelve hundred and fifty dollars* annually; that of Mr. Bangs, I think, *fifteen hundred or upward*—that of Mr. Merritt, about *twelve hundred*—that of Mr. Waugh, *sixteen hundred*—that of Mr. Mason is, I think, over *one thousand* and under *fifteen hundred dollars*." Now, whether it is understood that besides this moneyed compensation, these gentlemen receive a furnished house, rent free, table expenses, &c. according to the Discipline, we are not informed. If so, the foregoing sums would be swelled to a very handsome remuneration for their toils.

Dr. Durbin's statements referred to a period more than *twenty years ago*. A few years later, a correspondent in Baltimore wrote to the author: "In regard to this city, I have no doubt you might safely estimate 'table expenses,' &c. at

from seven to eight hundred dollars, and the average of their house rent at *three hundred*."

But to return to our estimate for the country. If the preachers, as we have shown, have ordained *six hundred dollars* as their annual salary, it is *justly due*, or it is not. If *not justly due*, then it is "the wages of unrighteousness;" but if it be *justly due* to the preacher, why are Presbyterian ministers denounced for receiving generally a much smaller sum, particularly as it is always the voluntary offering of the people to the man of their choice, not a preacher sent by the bishop and saddled on the congregation, whether they will or not?

In reply to these statements, it has been retorted with much warmth, "The preachers *do not get* the sums allowed by the Discipline." Very probably in many cases it is so. We should think it strange if it were otherwise. There is some reason, however, to believe, as will be shown presently, that the payment of the allowance is the ordinary practice, its non-payment the exception. But admitting that the preachers "*do not get*" what their rules allow, it must be because the people will *not submit to be taxed* to the full amount agreed upon by their spiritual rulers. We have already cited the rule of the Discipline, declaring "*the offender must be cut off*" on the *third instance* of "*neglect of duties of any kind*," or "*disobedience to the order and discipline of the church*;" that is, "*if there be no sign of humiliation*." Of course, it follows, that if this rule were put in force, every *third instance* of "*neglect*" to pay the preacher would be followed by *excommunication*, if there were no signs of repentance! And again: "Remember, a Methodist preacher is to mind *every point* great and small in the Methodist Discipline." If the preacher's salary is not paid, what does it prove? Why, only that they have gone a little *too fast* and *too far* in passing the laws which impose the tax upon the people, or in common phrase, "*have reckoned without their*

host." The people will not submit to their rules, and the preachers *dare not enforce them*; and there they stand recorded evidence against their authors of their disposition to take *much more than they can get*, without risking the loss of many of their members. The tax laws are there a terror to evil doers who might neglect to pay the preacher, and no doubt thousands are thereby collected from the weak and credulous who would rather give their money than cause strife, or run the hazard of being excluded from the church.

In my next Letter, reference will be made to facts, in order to shed further light upon the question of the payment of the preachers' salaries.

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## LETTER XIX.

### ARE THE PREACHERS' SALARIES PAID?

REV. SIR—We come now to the testimony of facts, in regard to the payment of the liberal salaries which the traveling preachers have provided for themselves. We first quote the directions on pages 185, 188 of the "Discipline:" "Let there be made *weekly class collections* in all our societies where it is practicable," and "every preacher" having charge of a circuit is required to "make a *yearly collection*, and if expedient a *quarterly one*, in every congregation where *there is a probability the people will be willing to contribute*." It is admitted there is sometimes "a surplus in the hands of the stewards, after paying the allowances of the preachers in the circuit." *Secondly*, we adduce the following testimony extracted from the *Religious Intelligencer* of New Haven, p. 793: "I was brought up a Methodist," remarks this witness, "and my parents are to this hour members of that society. I have been a *preacher* in that denomination a number of years. In the year — I thought it my duty to request a dismission from that body; and as there was nothing

against my religious and moral character, I was accordingly dismissed, and united myself to a respectable association of Congregational ministers in New England. Soon after this I had a call to settle with the congregation of which I am now pastor. From this statement, you will easily conclude that I must be well acquainted with the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists. To the honor of the Methodists I can say, I always received my salary with great punctuality." (Here he makes some calculations, which are precisely like those given above, except that he actually received *four dollars* per week boarding for himself and wife, whilst we have stated it at seventy-five cents each in the foregoing calculation.) "As respects their not getting what the Discipline allows," adds this writer, "*it may be true in some few cases*; but without any reflection upon the Methodist preachers as a body, most of these men are of that class who would get far less in almost any other situation. I have made the proposal several times to my society, to place my salary on the plan of the Methodist Discipline." (Here he compares his salary with what it would be in the Methodist church, and finds that for his family of *seven* persons, his salary would be raised *twenty-eight dollars and the house rent*.) "That the respectable Methodist preachers do get their salaries (he continues), we cannot doubt. I can any time bring forward cases in which Methodist preachers have received *the notes of the circuit stewards on interest* for the balance of their salary for the year, when it has not been promptly paid." Such, then, is the unvarnished tale of this witness, satisfactorily proving that the statutes, by which the preachers have effectually repelled the charge of "making no provision for their own," are not a "dead letter," but a living principle, securing in the majority of cases (if this witness speak the truth), ample provision for themselves and "those of their own household." The *moneyed allowance* for themselves and wives (independently of house rent, table expenses and other items), *has several times been*

*enlarged*, but never reduced. And even the collection of their liberal salaries, as Dr. Schmucker observes, is not attended with the same trouble as in other churches, among other reasons, because a large income is annually derived from general funds.

A glance at some of these sources of income must suffice. *The Chartered Fund* was established in 1796, at which time the previously existing “*stock of the preachers’ fund*,” together with the profits of the book concern, were thrown into this fund, and the *interest* of the whole applied to the preachers’ salaries. This fund was reported the next year (1797) as yielding \$266 $\frac{1}{2}$ . In January, 1829, it amounted to \$27,000, and in 1843, Dr. Musgrave stated it at about “thirty thousand dollars.” Porter’s Compend of Methodism (1855) admits that its object was “to relieve the difficulties” of the preacher, and that it “has afforded partial relief.”

*The Centenary Fund*, Porter tells us, was established in 1839, when to commemorate the *hundredth year* of Methodism, “the amount contributed for different objects was estimated at \$600,000.”

“The Book Concern,” Porter informs us, originated in 1789. “It began,” he says, “with about \$600 capital, borrowed of the agent.” In less than twenty years (1808) there “was a capital in the ‘Concern’ of *forty-five thousand dollars*.” “In 1820 a branch was established at Cincinnati; and subsequently depositories in Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, Pittsburgh, Nashville, Boston, San Francisco, and other places, and a weekly paper established in connection with most of them.”

The value of the pecuniary interest invested in the New York establishment, may be estimated from the fact, that in the fire of February, 1836, “when the new buildings and nearly all the property were consumed, the *estimated loss* was *two hundred and fifty thousand dollars at least*.” The loss, adds Porter, “to the support of sick and needy preachers was well

understood." Accordingly, "about \$90,000 were realized in donations; which with some \$25,000 insurance, enabled the agents to start anew with encouraging prospects." "The capital stock," he adds, "has been gradually increasing." "In the New York Concern, it is estimated at \$626,406—and at Cincinnati \$190,542—or together, about *eight hundred and seventeen thousand dollars.*" Porter is himself a Methodist Episcopal preacher, and these estimates were published in 1855. The last five years have no doubt greatly swelled the sum total. Dr. Musgrave in 1842, published a statement which he derived "from the office at New York," and which was signed by Lane and Sanford, the agents. "The net profits of the New York Concern for the year," are there stated at \$39,738.10—"or nearly *forty thousand dollars*"—although they had lost in exchange upward of \$10,000 during the twelve months.

From these facts, some estimate may be formed of the immense and constantly increasing capital connected with the New York and Cincinnati Book Concerns and the other book depositories, with their weekly papers; and on p. 36 of the "Discipline," the General Conference is expressly forbidden "to appropriate the produce of the Book Concern and the Charter Fund to any purpose other than for the benefit of the traveling, supernumerary, superannuated and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows and children." Besides, every preacher is officially a book agent, "who is to see that his circuit be duly supplied with books." Thus they carry on an immense book trade over the wide extent of our country, the profits of which they apply to their own salary and the support of their widows and orphans. With near *five thousand* preachers, agents in this business, and "*seven or eight hundred thousand*" members, who are cautioned "*not to purchase any books which we publish, of any other persons than the aforesaid D. Hitt and T. Ware, and the Methodist ministers, or such persons as sell them by their consent*" (Portrait of

Methodism), the annual profits must be enormous in a concern of such unparalleled extent.\* And all the proceeds are appropriated by statute, after retaining the necessary capital to carry on the business, *to no other purpose than the payment of the preachers' allowance.* In what other denomination is there a security like this for ample compensation to their ministers for their self-denying toils? And in the light of these facts, how must we regard the outcry of Methodists against the clergy of other sects in regard to salary, when in fact no branch of the church on earth has a ministry placed on such high and independent footing in this respect as their own. Not only do they require their members, even in straitened circumstances, to contribute liberally (it is well known that *house maids* pay *four dollars* a year), but by a mighty machinery, reaching its hundred hands to every nook and corner of the land, they manage an unexampled traffic, which pours into their treasury its thousands and tens of thousands annually. But perhaps the worst feature of the system is the *agency* by which the people who pay this money are excluded from all part or lot in its distribution. Preachers pass the revenue laws and preachers meet to divide the spoil; in other words, fix the amount of their own salary, and allow themselves the sums they in their wisdom may consider lawfully due for their important services.

In further proof of these statements, we refer to the "Discipline." The conference composed exclusively of preachers, fix the amount of salary, and the preachers take up the collections, which are ordered "*to be brought or sent to the annual conference*" to be disposed of *exclusively* by preachers! It is true the moneys are in the first instance "*to be lodged with the stewards,*" who are laymen, and this is an apparent exception to the above remarks; but on examination

\* See Dr. Schmucker's letters to Rev. Mr. Young. In 1855, Porter states the traveling preachers at 4,814, and the supernumeraries 669. The total of members he sets down at 783,000.

it will be found to be only *apparent*, not real. Who *nominate* the stewards? The preachers exclusively. Who *elect* them? The quarterly conference. Who compose this conference? *Preachers*, who are *self-appointed*; "*exhorters*," appointed *exclusively* by the *preachers*; "*leaders*," also appointed only by the *preachers*; and "*stewards*," nominated by the *preachers*. This is the body which **ELECTS** the steward, after he is *nominated* by the preacher! This is one feature of Dr. Bangs' "*elective system!*" We respectfully submit that it would be quite as republican and fair, and certainly much more *open* and *candid*, for the preacher to take the *appointment* of the steward directly into his own hands, or himself perform the duties of *treasurer* of the circuit. These stewards, be it also remembered, are bound to pay the preachers just the sums *they have awarded to themselves* for *quarterage*; and the surplus, if any, goes into the hands of the *preachers* in conference assembled; and one of the "*duties*" of the steward (on the third "*neglect*" of which he may be excommunicated), is "*to be subject* to the bishops, the presiding elder, and the elder, deacon, and traveling preachers of the circuit." So that he is not only the creature of their will, but completely under their rod.

It is replied, however, with great indignation, "that not a cent can be had for *table expenses* and *house rent* without the consent and authority of a lay committee." But not to insist upon the fact that the conference (of preachers) can dispense with this committee whenever it pleases them—we inquire, Who are the members of this lay committee? The *stewards*! It is "*a committee of stewards*"; and, as we have just shown, might with about the same propriety be "*a committee of preachers*!"

Again: it is argued that the preacher's salary cannot be rated at *six hundred dollars*, because "*it is impossible* to tell how much such a committee, in any given case, will allow for *house rent* and *table expenses*," and it is even suggested that

they may refuse to allow any thing. But what saith the Discipline? “*It shall be THE DUTY of said committee to make an estimate of the amount necessary to furnish fuel and table expenses.*”—“And the stewards *shall provide*, by such means as they may devise, *to meet such expenses*, in money or otherwise.” But the rule before referred to expressly declares, that “*in case of neglect of DUTIES of any kind,*” or “*disobedience to the order and discipline of the church,*” the guilty person is, on the *third offense*, to be “*cut off,*” whether he be steward or member of committee. They are bound, on pain of excommunication, to make an estimate of “*the amount necessary,*” not any amount they may please to allow the preacher, but that *precise amount* which, according to ordinary rates of expenditure, is “*necessary*” for fuel and table expenses, and “*provide to meet such expenses* in money or otherwise.” In view of such facts, it is folly to talk of this committee having “*power to allow sixty cents instead of six hundred dollars !!*” And to make assurance doubly sure, it is declared to be “*the duty of the presiding elders and preachers to use their influence to carry the rules respecting building and renting houses for the preachers into effect.*” “*And it is recommended to the annual conference to make a special inquiry of their members respecting this part of their duty.*” The preachers are to “*use their influence !*” What kind or degree of influence the preachers and the conference are empowered to exert over the stewards, when it is known that if they “*neglect their duty*” in making up the preachers’ salaries, and securing them comfortable, well-furnished houses, on the *third offense* “*they must be cut off,*” except they repent and mend their ways, it is not difficult to understand!!

In speaking of the position and prospects of the traveling clergy, it is common to represent them as “*abandoning almost every earthly interest* in entering upon an itinerant career, and submitting to labors and trials that few have nerve enough to endure.”\* Very different, however, is the judg-

\* Porter’s Compendium, p. 377.

ment of the Baltimore Reformers, or Methodist Protestants. "We are of the opinion," they say, "that a system which at once elevates men from the various departments of humble life, and from a state of dependence to sovereign rule; from comparative ignorance to the means of improvement and knowledge, so far from being a system of *sacrifice and self-denial*, is one of great enjoyment, and *it sometimes proves a system of EMOLUMENT.*" This is the verdict of men who had themselves been Episcopal Methodists. As preachers they had tasted of *the cup* of "labors and trials that few have nerve to endure!"

Such then is the POVERTY of the traveling ministry of Methodism. Six or seven hundred dollars secured in compensation of labors, for the right performance of which there has not been any preparatory expenditure worthy of notice, is no mean provision for the good things of this life. In most other denominations, the intended minister is required to pass through a course of training, from seven to twelve years in duration, in which he must expend a small estate, before he can enter upon the duties of his profession; and if, in the providence of God, he is disabled by disease or accident after the few first years or weeks of his ministry, he must resign his charge, and of course his means of subsistence, to some more favored occupant. Not so the preacher of Methodism. After the expiration of the few first years or weeks of his ministry, even though reduced by the visitation of Heaven to a state of utter helplessness, he is entitled to a clear income for himself and wife of two hundred dollars, or the interest of *three thousand three hundred and thirty-three dollars*; and his children are also provided for. It may be questioned whether any man, minister or layman, would be considered far from the pathway of wealth, who, in *four years*, or as it may be, in *four days*, with scarce any previous expenditure, and with no risk of pecuniary loss, could realize an annual income of equal magnitude. And should the preacher survive

for fifty years in a state of incapacity, and his wife be also spared, they will be entitled to draw the sum of ten thousand dollars, besides the support of their children.

On the whole, it is obvious that the Methodist clerical orders possess very considerable *financial* skill. This we think has been fully proved in the previous discussion, and may be made still more plain by one or two additional facts. "It is contrary to the Methodist economy to build houses with pews to sell or rent." But, as has been well remarked by my correspondent in Baltimore, "more money is actually paid by many families in their weekly tax at class meeting than they would be required to pay for a pew in one of our churches. Multitudes are deceived by the smallness of the periodical sum, and have no idea of the amount in the course of the year."\* Besides, there is another very important reason why they are opposed to the *pew system*. If *the people* owned the pews they could *control the house*, which would be an utter abomination in the eyes of the preachers! The conference would no longer have the power to use the property for their own purposes, contrary to the *unanimous wish* of the contributors and real owners. Therefore *pews* would be a dangerous innovation!

In connection with these statements, let the reader recur to the evidence adduced in a foregoing Letter, that the ownership of every Methodist church and parsonage is vested in the conference. The authorized deed makes no mention of the particular congregation as a party in the transaction, but only of the Methodist Episcopal church in the United States;

\* The following facts came within my own knowledge. A person who had been in the habit of worshiping with Presbyterians, united with the Methodists, together with his family. He very candidly acknowledged that whereas *he used* to pay *six or seven* dollars annual pew rent, he was taxed by the Methodist preachers at the rate of a dollar per head per quarter for himself and family; amounting during the year to upward of *twenty dollars*. And he very honestly declared, the "*preachers*" should hold their peace on that topic.

and the principle has been actually decided by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in the case of an appeal, by a minority of trustees or agents of the conference, from the verdict of a jury previously given in favor of the majority both of the congregation and of the trustees, who had joined the Protestant Methodists. The Supreme Court, therefore, has settled the principle that a minority, *however small*, of the faithful servants of the conference, may, on the ground of the only authorized form of deed, dispossess a majority, *however large*, of their property in a church or parsonage. Submission to the sovereign authority of a conference of preachers is the only legal title to funds thus vested. “It is therefore undeniable, that if every member and every trustee of a church thus deeded, were to regard any future measures of the conference as tyrannical, and should desire to withdraw and introduce other preachers, the conference could turn the key on them, and they would be compelled to submit.” In proportion, therefore, as the members of the church secede, and vacate the houses and lands which they have occupied, will an immense and accumulating revenue of this sort be placed in the hands of the preachers composing the conference. The Protestant Methodists may get the men, but the Episcopal Methodists hold fast the money.

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## LETTER XX.

ARTICLES AND DISCIPLINE—THEIR CURIOUS ORIGIN AND PROMINENT FEATURES—WESLEY'S AURICULAR CONFESSION, &c.

REV. SIR—We have had occasion in previous Letters to mention repeatedly the “Book of Discipline” of the Methodist Episcopal church, for the purpose of directing attention to some of its singular statements. We are not done with

the subject; but as it is one of considerable interest, we propose to confer upon it the distinction of a separate investigation. This seems the more proper, as it is but repaying a debt of long standing, and due to Methodism for the notice she has been pleased to bestow upon the Presbyterian Confession of Faith.

#### XIV. REVIEW OF THE ARTICLES AND BOOK OF DISCIPLINE.

1. *The origin of the work.* It is neither more nor less than the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England, in a mutilated condition. The original was formed, as Dr. Miller tells us, on the basis of five Romish missals, or prayer books, which had been in use in the same number of popish bishoprics. This liturgy at first contained a number of things grossly popish; and even after undergoing a "considerable purgation," as Dr. M. has it, by Calvin and others, still retained a "number of articles, adopted from the missals of the Church of Rome, which exceedingly grieved the more pious and evangelical part of the church, but which the Queen (Elizabeth) and her clergy refused to exclude."\* These facts will fully account for the savor of popery which, in previous Letters, we detected in the form of administering the Lord's Supper and in some other particulars.

The book, in its original form, was entirely too Calvinistic for Mr. Wesley; hence he thought proper to expurgate *fourteen* of its doctrinal articles. Among those rejected are the *fifteenth*, which asserts "that Christ alone was without sin;" and the *eighteenth*, which condemns the assertion that "every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth," and which further affirms "that holy Scripture doth set forth *only the name of Jesus Christ* whereby men must be saved." These erasures are very suggestive.

\* Calvin, in one of his letters, says it contained many "*tolerabiles ineptias*," i. e. "*tolerable fooleries*;" *tolerable*, he means, for children!

2. *Sympathy with fundamental errors.* After what has been said, it is not at all surprising to find Mr. Wesley shaking hands with the Papists in the following cordial style : “Can nothing be done, even allowing us on both sides to *retain our own opinions*, for the softening our hearts toward each other.” “My dear friend, consider I am not persuading you to *leave or change your religion*,” &c. “We ought, without this endless *jangling about opinions*, to provoke one another to love and to good works. Let the *points wherein we differ* stand aside. Here are enough wherein we agree. *O brethren, let us not still fall out by the way!*” (Letter to a Roman Catholic.)

We have elsewhere quoted the admission of their greatest historian, Dr. Stevens, viz. that their “Articles” contain nothing which directly condemns “either *Calvinism* or *Universalism*”—the *former* of which they seem to regard as the “*heresy of all heresies!*” In regard to the Unitarians, they are also very liberal. Thus, in vol. x. p. 354, of their “*Ladies’ Repository*,” Rev. B. F. Teft, D. D. the editor, holds the following language in regard to the late Dr. Channing, the great champion of Socinianism : “Some will not allow Channing to have been a Christian, because he was a Unitarian preacher. Such a man, however, can well dispense with the good opinion of *such contemptible bigots*, to whatever fellowship they belong, when he has been followed to *heaven’s gate with the admiration of two hemispheres*. I do sincerely wish, both for these critics and myself, as good a seat in paradise as I believe is now occupied *by that best of all good and great men ever raised up by Massachusetts.*”

This is the sort of *religious instruction* which the oracles of Methodism prepare for the wives and children of the thousands of families which acknowledge them as spiritual teachers.

A curious illustration of the manner in which Methodism uses fanaticism and falsehood, is found in *Millerism*. Thus

Porter, whose "Compend" is highly lauded by bishops and others, speaks of "the general revival from the year 1840 to 1844," as follows: "The doctrine of Christ's *second coming* had considerable effect." "Many feared it." "The *mistake* had no other influence in this regard, than to prompt them to seek religion *then*." He admits that Millerism afterward "became identified with so many other heresies, it *poisoned* all who came under its influence, and interposed one of the greatest obstacles to religion," &c. "Notwithstanding," he adds, "there was much *wheat gathered*." For example, he tells us "that in 1843 the net INCREASE of the Methodist Episcopal church was 154,634, and in 1844 it was 102,831." Yet he admits that in *three years* (1844-1847) they "suffered a net DECREASE of more than *fifty thousand* members."\* Such is the testimony of Porter, a "prophet of their own." Still he thinks the "proportion that fell away was not greater than is usual," and that he can account "for the appalling decrease without disparaging the character of the work *in the least!*"

3. The Methodist "Articles and Discipline" came down, as we have shown, in regular "succession" from the English "Articles and Liturgy of the Established Church." The fact that the original was submitted to Calvin and other divines of the Continent, and thus *purged* of sundry of its popish "fooleries," may perhaps also account, in part, for the strong Calvinism of many of its doctrinal statements, and which contradict and overthrow its Arminianism.

#### 4. *Statement of the origin of the Methodist Episcopal church*

\* Rev. Parsons Cooke tells of a Rev. G. Fox, a presiding elder, who "said he had made Miller's theory a subject of prayer and study; and that in answer to prayer he had received as *clear a witness of the Spirit* in favor of that theory, as he had of his own justification! He traveled through his district, having access to all Methodist pulpits, preaching everywhere that the end of the world was coming in 1843; and he employed his pen with great industry, and his writings were abundantly published in the Methodist periodicals."

*in America.* We are told on page 14 of the Book of Discipline, that “Mr. Wesley, *preferring the Episcopal mode of church government*, solemnly set apart, by the imposition of his hands and prayer, Thomas Coke to the episcopal office; and having delivered to him letters of episcopal orders, commissioned and directed him to set apart Francis Asbury to the same episcopal office.” Now besides the intrinsic absurdity already pointed out, of a priest ordaining a bishop, and the exceeding doubtfulness of the matter of fact, that Wesley, who declared he would rather be called “fool, knave, villain,” than bishop, should designate another to bear the office and title he so much abhorred; besides all this, observe with what authority the doctors of Methodism speak when writing for the special use and benefit of the sect. Mark their language—“episcopal mode of church government”—“episcopal office”—“letters of episcopal orders”—“episcopal ordination,” &c. But with what commendable modesty does Dr. Bangs relate the same story in the Appendix to Buck’s Theological Dictionary? How do these proud pretensions dwindle, when about to be laid more fairly before the public? The Doctor tells us, “that being assisted by other presbyters of the Church of England, by prayer and imposition of hands, he (Wesley) set apart Thomas Coke, a presbyter of said church, as a *superintendent* of the Methodist societies in America” (not a word about his being made a bishop, or receiving the episcopal office). Again: “Mr. Asbury being first elected by the unanimous voice of the preachers, was ordained by Dr. Coke, first to the office of deacon, then elder, and then superintendent or *bishop*.” In the Book of Discipline, the statement says nothing about “*superintendent*;” it is nothing but episcopal mode of church government, episcopal office, episcopal orders, episcopal ordination. But here in the Appendix to Buck, it is all *superintendent*, and the poor bishop comes limping in the rear, in the shape of an *alias*, just as though he were a per-

sonage of almost no importance. The very term from which the church derives the name “episcopal,” is introduced so modestly that it might be supposed a thing of almost no importance, and not a word is uttered of those high-sounding titles enumerated above.

If, moreover, in the Methodist system, the terms bishop and superintendent be synonymous, and both imply merely that their possessor is an elder, who on account of age or talents has received *from man* a more extensive superintendence of ecclesiastical affairs than ordinarily belongs to the eldership, why all this pompous talk of “episcopal ordination,” “episcopal office,” “letters of episcopal orders,” &c.? Why this puerile affectation of high-sounding titles—this ludicrous mimicry of the English hierarchy? How would it be more absurd to speak of Presbyterian episcopacy, since every pastor *superintends* a portion of the church of Christ? And especially, is there not something profane in the repetition of the solemn Divine rite of ordination (the New Testament knows nothing about “consecration to the ministry”), whenever an elder is appointed to a larger sphere of superintendence than formerly he occupied? With about as much propriety might every Presbyterian minister be re-ordained, whenever he is removed from a narrow to an extensive circuit of influence. Whether therefore we consider the Methodist bishop as holding an office of Divine origin, essentially distinct from and superior to that of elder—or regard these offices as identical, with only enlarged powers received of men on the part of the bishop, it is obvious that the whole subject is involved in a labyrinth of inconsistencies.

5. *Methodist liberality.* On page 27 we have a rule forbidding “the doing ordinary work, buying or selling on the Sabbath,” but no prohibition of amusements on that day. This indeed might be regarded merely as an oversight, were it not that we have line upon line, and precept upon precept, in regard to other matters of much less importance.

On page 27 we find the following: "It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should evidence their desire of salvation." Very well. But how are they to evidence this desire? Among other things, the fourth paragraph from the above reads as follows: "By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning to be so; *employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business*"—and this, be it remembered, is one of those "general rules" which, on the next page, are said "*to be all taught of God*," even in his written word; and "*which his Spirit writes on truly wakened hearts*." "If there be any among us," adds the Book of Discipline, "*who habitually break any of them*, we will admonish him of the error of his ways, we will bear with him for a season. But then if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. *We have delivered our own souls!*" In other words, if any Methodist shall *employ*, habitually, any person not "of the household of faith, or groaning to be so," or shall habitually *buy* of such a person preferably to a brother Methodist; if he *repent not*, he is turned out—that the conscientious preachers may "*deliver their own souls!*"

In "some directions" given by Mr. Wesley to the "Band Societies," in 1744, the members are required to "attend constantly on all the *ordinances of God*;" and the fourth subdivision under this head, is—"to observe as days of fasting or abstinence, *all Fridays* in the year." To fast every Friday one of the ordinances of God! Their good old grandmother of Rome has an "ordinance" requiring all genuine sons of the church *to eat no meat on Friday*; but where to open my Bible to find such an ordinance, is an entire mystery. The blessed Redeemer enjoined fasting, but specified no particular time for the discharge of the duty; but Methodism would be wiser, and specifies one day in each week!

6. *Practice against theory.* On page 113 it is said, "No person shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper among us, who

is guilty of any practice for which we would exclude a member of our church." But from page 65 we learn that one of the grounds of excluding members of the Methodist church, is, "removing from one circuit to another without a note of recommendation from the preacher." But the case is materially altered when persons are enticed away from other churches, without any certificate or note of recommendation. They are freely and with open arms admitted, and that too in many instances where they would be denied, even if they requested a note of recommendation. Indeed, the usage of Methodism in this particular is subversive of every thing like order and discipline in the Christian church.

7. *Reverently obey the bishops.* "Will you reverently obey your chief ministers?" is a question put at the ordination of elders, and another of the same import at the ordination of deacons. There is a considerable improvement practiced at Rome. *There* they kneel and *reverently* kiss the toe of his holiness! See this identical form of expression in the Bull of Pope Innocent VIII. for exterminating the Waldenses—"Reverently to obey the apostolical mandates," &c. viz. the bloody edicts of his antichristian majesty!

But perhaps the most curious illustration of the *reverence* and *obedience* exacted of the lower orders of the Methodist ministry, is found on pages 57, 58. In answer to the question, "What is the duty of a preacher?" we have twelve specifications, and among others, "Be diligent"—"Let your motto be, *Holiness to the Lord*"—"Be ashamed of nothing but sin"—"You have nothing to do but to save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work"—"Save as many as you can"—"It is your duty to employ your time in the manner in which we direct; in preaching and visiting from house to house; in reading, meditation and prayer." When we had read thus far, we almost involuntarily exclaimed, admirable! What could be more scriptural and excellent! But the very next sentence was a dead fly in the ointment—

“*ABOVE ALL*, if you labor with us in the Lord’s vineyard, it is needful you should do *that part* of the work which we advise, at *those times and places* which we judge most for his glory.” *Above all!* *Above* preaching, and visiting, and reading, and meditation, and prayer! *Above* spending and being spent for Christ, and holiness, and the salvation of souls! *Above all these*, “reverently OBEY your chief ministers.” Truly, it would seem that in the Methodist catalogue of ministerial virtues, TO OBEY is the highest attainment of Christian perfection—the pearl of great price—the sumnum bonum—the one thing needful—not only “better than sacrifice,” but better than holiness and salvation! *Rebellion* is as the sin of witchcraft, and *stubbornness* is as iniquity and idolatry! In the light of these facts we may readily credit the testimony of one who had himself been a Methodist, “that nearly all of the inferior clergy are kept in a state of spiritual bondage, so that, on many occasions, they dare not speak or act as the Scriptures prescribe and their consciences dictate, *lest they should offend the men in power*, and be chastised by a remove to a disadvantageous circuit, *by a breaking down in worldly business*, or by excommunication.” An excellent school, doubtless, in which the refractory may “learn obedience by the things they suffer.” So also Mr. M’Caine, a Protestant Methodist, who had been long one of their preachers, says: “In upward of *fifty* years, we have known but *one* traveling preacher expelled for false doctrine, and but few for immorality. But we have heard of *very many* who were expelled for opposing the bishop.”

8. *Wesley’s Auricular Confession.* Although omitted in the latest edition of “the Discipline” (1856), the following rules for “Band Societies” as organized by Mr. Wesley, were formerly a part of that book. “A band consists of two, three or four believers, who have confidence in each other.” Only it is particularly observed that “in one of these bands, all must be *men*, or all *women*; and all married or all unmarried.”

The wisdom of this precaution will appear directly. The *fourth* article on which the members of the “band” *agree*, is “to speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in *temper*, *words* or *actions* (in “thought, word or deed,” Wesley originally wrote it), and the *temptations* we *have felt* since our last meeting.” The *sixth* article is “to desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then *ask the rest* in order *as many and as searching questions* as may be, concerning their *state, sins* and *temptations*.” They manage this matter a little differently at Rome, but it is doubtful whether they have a better *confessional* than this. But there is more to come: among “*the questions proposed to one before he is admitted*” to the band, we find the following: “Is it your desire and *design* to be on this and all other occasions *entirely open*, so as to speak without *disguise* and without *reserve*?” Wesley wrote the latter part originally as follows: “*So as to speak everything that is in your heart, without EXCEPTION, without disguise, and without reserve!*” Popery herself demands no more thorough *confession* than this. And besides, the following questions are required to be asked “*at every meeting*,” viz. “*What known sins have you committed since our last meeting? What particular temptations have you met with?*” After what we have seen, it is not surprising that Mr. Wesley should write a highly commendatory life of Mr. De Renty (a Roman Catholic), nor that the following passages should proceed from his pen: “One day he visited a person, who from groundless suspicion had cruelly used his wife. Mr. De Renty accosted him with such language, that he *was persuaded at length to go to confession!*! which he had not done in twelve years before.” And of De Renty himself, he says—“*He made his confession* (to a priest) almost every day till his death!!” This biography of a thorough papist, Wesley placed in his “Christian Library,” and recommended to his followers. “He had great respect (ho

adds) for *holy persons*, especially for *priests*. Whenever he met them, he saluted them with *profound humility*: and in his travels, he would *alight off his horse* to do it.” “And without reply or disputing, with the utmost respect and submission, he exactly followed the order of his director” (or confessor). The reader will recollect — “*Reverently obey your chief ministers!*”

9. On page 105, infants are called “elect children”—implying that as, according to Arminians, *election* brings with it *non-election*, there are non-elect infants, some of whom *may be in hell!* The use Methodists make of the false charge of “infant damnation” brought against Calvinists, was noticed in a former Letter. “Thus,” says Dr. Musgrave, “thousands of uninformed people are persuaded that Presbyterians do verily believe \* \* \* that children not a span long are in hell!” If we thought these “accusers of the brethren” really believed their own statements, we should at least feel pity for their want of information. The Rev. Parsons Cook, however, says: “We have been told by a seceding Methodist minister, that it is well known to him that Methodist ministers generally understand, as well as we do, that this doctrine is not preached by us; but that they *purposely keep alive the imputation because of the advantage which they have from it.*”

Under all the circumstances, there is much reason to believe that this testimony is true. Yet their *five thousand* preachers and hundreds of thousands of members are busied day and night in circulating such representations of Calvinism as the following: “Moloch caused only children to pass through the fire, and that fire was soon quenched; or, the corruptible body being consumed, its torment was at an end. But God, by his *eternal decree*, fixed before they had done good or evil, causes not only *children a span long*, but the parents also, to pass through the fire that shall never be quenched, \* \* \* and the body being now incorruptible, will be ever consuming and never consumed.”\*

\* Doct. Tracts, p. 173.

We now bring this *expose* of “the Difficulties of Arminian Methodism” to a close. Not because the theme is exhausted, but because under the *fourteen* distinct heads already stated, enough has been said, if we are not greatly mistaken, to satisfy every impartial mind of the true character of that system. Is it possible that the God of *truth* has adopted such a scheme of doctrine and discipline as this to spread Scripture *holiness* through the world! Is it probable that He who prayed, “*Sanctify them by thy truth,*” is the author and patron of Arminian Methodism? We speak of course of *the system* as distinguished by its peculiarities from the doctrine and government revealed in the Scriptures. We have not questioned the fact, that so far as Methodism teaches certain great truths common to all Christians, she has done good—neither is it denied that Unitarianism and even Popery, embrace many valuable truths, but marred and enfeebled by hateful corruptions. To a certain extent, the same is true of Arminian Methodism. And the blind spirit of violence and misrepresentation which her leading writers exhibit toward Presbyterians and other Calvinistic bodies, is only a bitter fruit of her delusions. “There are many truly excellent men in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal church, and thousands of truly pious persons in her communion”\*—but it is also true that the improprieties and excesses which have come under review, are not commonly approved nor countenanced by that class of Methodists.

If the Scriptures were designed to be our pattern in all things pertaining to truth and godliness—if the decisions of reason founded upon the word of God, demand our respect, next to the Inspired Oracles themselves, we are compelled to believe that much remains to be done to fashion Arminian Methodism agreeably to “the pattern shewed in the mount.” And whatever else may have been done or left undone, one thing, we think, has been fully established, viz. that there are vulnerable points connected with the Arminian scheme,

which are far from justifying the air of arrogance and tone of denunciation so common with its modern advocates.

Much more might be said of the strange *methods* they often adopt to advance their sectarian projects—their garbled quotations, their unscrupulous denunciations, their unmitigated exclusiveness, their spurious zeal in pressing their ministrations upon localities abundantly supplied with evangelical preaching, (only not Methodism!) their great *joy*, not so much “over the conversion of the ninety and nine” impenitent, as “over the conversion of one Presbyterian sinner,” their gladness when they succeed in making a *rajd* upon Calvinistic, and even upon other *Arminian* churches. “How frequently,” to use the language of “the pastoral letter” of the Presbytery of Lexington, Va. “in the midst of their charitable professions, have even their pulpits resounded with severe denunciations against us, representing us as a set of hypocritical formalists—as holding doctrines which came from hell and lead to hell. Have they not times innumerable reviled our ministers as avaricious hirelings,” &c. But to enlarge upon such topics as these, would swell our work beyond all reasonable bounds.

## A P P E N D I X I.

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### FALSE QUOTATIONS EXPOSED.

IN this Appendix we propose to examine certain references, which appear in a popular Methodist tract, entitled, "A Dialogue between a Predestinarian and his Friend." This tract, a favorite instrument of sectarian zeal, was written by Mr. Wesley, and it is cited by Drs. Bangs, Fisk, and others, with such frequency, and its blunders are copied and circulated with so much confidence and industry, as to justify an investigation of its merits. Blindly following the authority of this publication, these learned gentlemen have quoted the *chapters* of the Assembly's Catechism, and thus exposed themselves to the correction of any well-instructed Sabbath scholar.

This publication we suppose to be one of those methods by which the father of Methodism purposed "to stop the mouths of Calvinists." (Works, vol. iii. p. 405.) It is graced with the following line: "Out of thine own mouth!" The truth of the motto will appear as we pass along. We will first notice the references to the Assembly's Confession, or *Catechism*, as they call it.

FRIEND. "Sir, I have heard that you make God the *author of all sin*, and the destroyer of the greater part of mankind without mercy."

PРЕDESTINARIAN. "I deny it; I only say, 'God did from all eternity unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.'" (Assembly's Catechism, chap. 3.)

Here it is supposed that we are convicted "*out of our own mouth*," of making "God the author of all sin." But besides that the very next words in the Confession are—"yet so as neither is God the author of sin,"—we refer to the Confession itself, and to the uniform testimony of Calvinistic writers, to prove that they maintain the distinction between the *efficient* and the *permissive* decrees of God. And as to our holding that "the *greater part* of mankind are destroyed without mercy," the quotation from the Confession says nothing upon that subject; and until the proof is adduced, it must be considered as a groundless assertion.

F. "Does sin *necessarily* come to pass?"

P. "Undoubtedly. For 'the almighty power of God extends itself to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men.'" (Assem. Cat. chap. 5.)

This extract is erroneous and unfair in two respects: 1. It is given as a *continuous quotation*, whereas two whole lines are omitted, which are essential to the sense. 2. The Confession does not say, “the almighty power of God *extends itself* to the first fall,” &c. There is no such sentiment in the passage, which is as follows: “The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that IT (his providence) extendeth itself,” &c. We greatly fear that *this method* of stopping the mouths of Calvinists will not redound to the honor of its author and advocates.

We next examine the references to Calvin's Institutes:

I. (Book 1, chap. 16, sec. 8.) “Nothing is more absurd than to think any thing at all is done but by the ordination of God.” Allen, whose translation is used by Watson, renders it as follows: “Nothing could be more absurd than for any thing to happen *independently of the ordination* of God, because it would happen at *random*, or by chance.” The object of Wesley was to convict Calvin of teaching that *sin was so ordained* as that God was its author. But besides the mistranslation, “by the ordination of God,” as though that were the efficient *cause* of all things, instead of “*independently of the ordination of God*;” just six lines farther down, Calvin quotes Augustine with approbation, as proving that “God is the supreme and first (or highest) cause of all things, because *nothing happens but by his command or permission*. He does not suppose God,” continues Calvin, “to remain *an idle spectator*, determining to permit any thing” (and every thing), that is, to look listlessly on and resign the helm of the universe to be controlled by contingency or chance. “There is an intervention of actual volition (that is, *a will to permit*,) which otherwise could never be considered as a cause.” The reader can now judge whether Calvin meant to teach that God is the author or *efficient cause* of sin, and whether the above quotation is consistent with truth.

II. (Book 1, chap. 15 (16), sec. 3.) “Every action and motion of every creature is so governed by the hidden counsel of God, that nothing can come to pass but what was ordained by him.” The following is the translation of Allen: “In the creatures there is no erratic power, or action, or motion; but they are so governed by the secret counsel of God that nothing can happen but what is *subject to his knowledge* and *decreed by his will*,” that is, as explained above, nothing can happen but by his *command or permission*. Calvin is speaking of “*the stars, and comets, and signs of heaven*,” and rebukes “immoderate and superstitious fears,” as though these “creatures had of themselves power to hurt us, or could *fortuitously injure us*.” And though his language

*admits* of being extended to intelligent moral agents, yet as explained above by himself, it is obviously perverted from its original and true meaning.

III. (Book 1, chap. 15 (16), sec. 8.) “The wills of men are so governed by the will of God, that they are carried on straight to the mark which he has foreordained.” This is designed to show that Calvin taught that God works on the wills of men, *so as to work wickedness in the wicked*, and so must be the author of sin. But look a moment at the language of Calvin in its connection: “Not only the heavens and the earth, but also the deliberations and volitions of men are so governed by his *providence*, as to be directed to the end appointed by it. What then? You will say, does nothing happen *fortuitously* or *contingently*? ” He had set himself to prove that there could “*be no such thing as fortuitous contingency*,” or chance (sec. 4); and in the passage referred to by the author of the tract, he was showing that not even the minds, thoughts and volitions of men are exerted “*independently of God*, whilst they cannot even speak a word but what he chooses.” (Sec. 6.) But what has this to do with the *author of sin*, or the *cause* of wickedness in heart and life? How does God’s holding the hearts of men in his hand, and turning them as rivers of water are turned (that is, overruling, restraining, and limiting their exercises, and especially their wickedness); how does this prove, as the tract affirms, that “*all must do just what they do*,” so that they are deprived of liberty of will and free agency? The passage is shamefully misrepresented and perverted from its plain and obvious meaning, to teach what Calvin never taught, as will yet more fully appear. The scope of the passage is to overthrow the atheistical notion of *fortune* or *chance*. Not a sparrow falls, nor a thought or volition of the mind arises, but what is under the superintendence of the Divine Providence. God has his own appointed ends in his all-wise plan, to promote, even by the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore it does not occur by *chance*, but by his *permission*, purposing so to control and “*restrain*” it, as to make it subserve his own wise and holy purposes. This is the meaning of Calvin. “Augustine,” says Calvin, “makes the following *correct distinction*—‘that they sin, *proceeds from themselves*; that in sinning they perform this or that particular action, is from the *power of God*, who divideth the darkness according to his pleasure.’ ” Book 2, chap. 4, sec. 4. Is this the same as saying, “*their sins proceed from God?*”

IV. (Book 3, chap. 24, sec. 8.) “I will not scruple to own that the will of God lays a necessity on all things, and that every thing he wills necessarily comes to pass.”

The reference is probably to a passage in chap. 23, sec. 8. "I shall not hesitate to confess with Augustine, that the will of God is the necessity of things, and that what he has willed necessarily comes to pass, as *those things are really about to happen which he has foreseen.*"

To say that men are under a *necessity* of committing sin, is, in the common popular acceptation of the terms, both absurd and impious, and this is what Wesley labors to prove against Calvin. But it is a very important question—"What did Calvin mean by *necessity*?" This we discover by comparing other passages, thus—"A distinction has prevailed in the schools, of *three kinds of liberty*: the first, freedom from *necessity*; the second, freedom from sin; the third, freedom from misery; of which the *first* is *naturally inherent in man*, so that nothing can ever deprive him of it; the other two are lost by sin. *This distinction*," adds Calvin, "*I readily admit*, except that it improperly confounds *necessity* with *coaction*. And the wide difference between these things will appear in another place." (Book 2, chap. 2, sec. 5, &c.) "When man subjected himself to this *necessity*, he was not deprived of will, but of soundness of will." "Augustine thus expresses himself: 'The will being changed for the worse, I know not by what corrupt and surprising means, *is itself the author of the necessity to which it is subject*,' &c. Afterward he says that we are oppressed with a yoke, but no other than that of a *voluntary servitude*," &c. &c. Again, Book 2, chap. 5, sec. 5. "Let them not suppose themselves excused by *necessity*, in which very thing they have a most evident cause of their condemnation." "For if we are bound by our own passions, which are under the government of sin, so that we are not at liberty to obey our Father, there is no reason why we should plead this *necessity* in our defense, the criminality of which is within ourselves, and must be imputed to us." Book 2, chap. 8, sec. 3. "Nor can we pretend to excuse ourselves by our want of ability—our inability is our own fault." *Ibid.* From these passages it is evident that the meaning of the term "necessity" in Calvin's work, is the same with certainty, or what Edwards calls "*philosophical necessity*." (Edwards on the Will, part 1, sec. 3.)

That Calvin is greatly misrepresented in this tract, as teaching necessity in such a sense as "that all things come to pass by the efficacious and irresistible will of God," is further proved by his representing men as under the restraining influence of Divine grace. Thus Book 2, chap. 2, sec. 3. "Should the Lord permit the minds of men to give up the reins to every lawless passion, there certainly would not be an individual in the world who would not evince all the crimes for

which Paul condemns human nature." This does not look like impelling the will of man to sin by inevitable necessity!! Indeed the early reformers seem to have been in the habit of employing the term necessity to mean "certainty." Thus Luther (*de servo arbitrio*, translated by Milner, *Ecc. Hist. vol. v.*): "So long as the operative grace of God is absent from us, everything we do has in it a mixture of evil; and therefore of necessity our works do not avail to salvation. Here," continues Luther, "I do not mean a necessity of compulsion, but a necessity as to the certainty of the event." Indeed in the very passage to which we suppose reference is made in the tract, Calvin explains the meaning of the term "necessity" as used by himself to imply "that those things are really about to happen which God has foreseen." It is not our business to decide whether Wesley's misrepresentation of the passage was the result of a want of information, or of something else.

V. (Book 3, chap. 23, sec. 7.) "God not only foresaw that Adam would fall, but also ordained that he should." The design of this is obviously to convict Calvin of teaching foreordination in such a sense as to imply that sin is brought about or efficiently caused by the Divine decree. But no person of candor would ever understand Calvin thus. "God," says Calvin, "not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and the ruin of his posterity in him, but also arranged all by the determination of his own will." "It belongs to his power to rule and govern all things by his hand." "He knew that it was more suitable to his Almighty goodness to bring good out of evil, than not to suffer (or permit) evil to exist," and therefore "ordained the life of angels and men in such a manner as to exhibit in it, first, what free will was capable of doing, and afterward, what could be effected by the blessings of his grace and the sentence of his justice." Here the very section which is perverted to mean that Adam sinned necessarily, by force of the Divine decree—this very section affirms that Adam was an example of "*what free agency was capable of doing!*" We should be glad to indulge the thought that this was the effect of ignorance.

VI. (Book 3, chap. 24, sec. 8.) "He sinned, because God so ordained"—"because the Lord saw good." The object of this reference is the same with the previous one. There is nothing in the place referred to, bearing even the most distant resemblance to the professed extract. In chap. 23, sec. 8, we read—"The first man fell because the Lord had determined it should so happen." "He determined thus, only because he foresaw it would tend to the just illustration of the glory of his name." But no person willing to do justice to Calvin,

would ever think of interpreting this to mean that Adam sinned necessarily by force of God's decree. For besides the proof already given, that Calvin taught that sin was ordained *permissively* (though not by a bare permission), in the very same section, and within a few lines of the supposed extract, we read—"Man falls according to the (permissive) appointment of Divine Providence; but he falls by his own fault." "They insist that God permits the destruction of the impious, but does not will it. But what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because it is his will (to permit it). It is not probable, however, that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission, without any appointment of God." (In other words, without his having appointed to overrule the fall of man to his own glory.) "Besides," continues Calvin, "their perdition depends on the Divine predestination in such a manner *that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves.*" "Wherefore, let us rather contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of mankind, than search after a hidden and altogether incomprehensible one, in the predestination of God." These passages, Wesley, if he had ever read the book, must have known to be there. The very section supposed to be quoted by the tract to convict Calvin of holding that God appoints or decrees sin, so that it comes to pass by his efficacious and irresistible will—this very section affirms that "man sinned by his own fault"—and that the cause and matter of his perdition is in himself!!

VII. (Book 3, chap. 23, sec. 7.) They deny that the Scripture says God decreed Adam's fall. They say he might have chosen either to fall or not: and that God foreordained only to treat him according to his desert. As if God had created the noblest of all his creatures, without foreordaining what should become of him." The design of this reference, as of the previous ones, is to convict Calvin of teaching that sin comes to pass necessarily, that men must do just what they do, and that they sin under the impelling influence of God's will, necessarily and irresistibly. But this is an utter misrepresentation of Calvin's meaning. "They maintain," he says, "that he (Adam) was possessed of free choice, that he might be the author of his own fate (this Calvin does not dispute); but that God decreed **NOTHING MORE** than to treat him according to his desert." Calvin admits that Adam was possessed of free choice. Thus, Book 1, chap. 15, sec. 8. "Adam could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will." "His choice of good and evil was free." "He was the voluntary procurer of his own destruction." But he utterly denies that God de-

ered “nothing more than to treat him according to his desert.” And in the very same section he goes on to explain his meaning—that “it belongs to Divine power to rule and govern all things by his hand,” and “to bring good out of evil.” And he rejects the idea that “God had created the noblest of his creatures without any determinate end”—that is, foreseeing his fall, he determined so to rule and govern his apostasy and its effects by his hand, as in the end to make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder to restrain, to the glory of his great name. Every one must perceive what an utter perversion of the passage is made by the author of the tract.

VIII. (Book 3, chap. 31, sec. 1.) “All men are not created for the same end; but some are foreordained to eternal life; others to eternal damnation. So according as every man was created for the one end or the other, we say he was elected or predestinated to life, or reprobated.” This reference is to chapter 31, whereas there are only 25 chapters in the book. The stereotyped volume of tracts has it chap. 21, sec. 1—but this too is a blunder. After considerable search, we found in chap. 21, sec. 5, a passage which bears a strong resemblance to the professed extract; but from the numerous gross errors in these references, we must suppose that the author of the tract had never seen the original work, but was the humble copyist of some preceding bungler. It must be admitted that Calvin employs very strong language, though perhaps not stronger than the Apostle Jude, speaking of “certain men crept in unawares,” “ungodly men,” “who were of old ordained to this condemnation” (Jude 4): nor stronger than Peter (1 Pet. 2: 8), “Being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed:” nor stronger than Wesley—“God foreappointed all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, not without, but according to their works, from the foundation of the world:” or as he afterward explains himself—“God eternally reprobated all disobedient unbelievers, as such, to damnation.” If our Methodist friends exclaim, “horrible!” “most horrible!!” we cannot help it. There it stands in their own approved standard writings. No Calvinist teaches reprobation in stronger terms than those, and as to the Presbyterian Confession, it does not even employ the term “reprobation.” See also reference 15, for Calvin’s views of man’s being created for a certain end.”

IX. (Book 3, chap. 21, sec. 7.) “God hath once for all appointed, by an eternal and unchangeable decree, to whom he would give salvation, and whom he would devote to destruction.” We have just seen how plainly and forcibly Mr. Wesley and his followers teach “eternal reprobation,” or reprobation to “damnation.” of “all disobedient.

unbelievers, according to God's foreknowledge of all their works, from the foundation of the world." And what is still more remarkable, in the tract, "Predestination calmly considered," they say, "This decree (of reprobation) without doubt God will not change, and man cannot resist." (Doct. Tracts, p. 15.) So that they teach not only that "reprobation to damnation" is eternal, but that it is *unchangeable and irresistible!*

X. (Book 3, chap. 22, sec. 1.) "So the vulgar think, that God, as he foresees every man will deserve, elects them to life, or devotes them to death and damnation." Allen has it—"It is a notion commonly entertained, that God adopts as his children such as he foreknows will be *deserving of his grace*; and devotes to the damnation of death others whose dispositions he sees will be inclined to wickedness and impiety." With regard to man's "deserving Divine grace," we need only quote Article 9 of the Methodist standards, viz. "We are accounted righteous only for the merit of our Lord, and not for our own works or *deservings!*" But that Calvin did maintain that the wicked are "devoted to death for their evil deserts," has been already shown. "Their perdition depends on the Divine predestination in such a manner that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves." "The evident cause of condemnation," he says, "is the corrupt nature of mankind." (Book 3, chap. 23, sec. 8.) "It remains now to be seen why the Lord does that which it is evident he does. If it be replied that this is done because men have deserved it by their impiety, wickedness and ingratitude, it will be a just and true observation." (Book 3, chap. 24, sec. 14.) The prominent object before Calvin's mind, in the passage quoted in the tract, is "the distinction between different persons, as it appears in the grace and providence of God." He is speaking of what Turretine and modern Calvinists call "comparative election and reprobation"—in other words, of the reason why, from the mass of mankind, all by nature equally and utterly undeserving, God subdues, converts, and saves one, and that one oftentimes the "publican and harlot," the most abandoned or profane; while others are left, in many cases the most moral and decent in their outward deportment. In this view of the subject, the passage has altogether a different meaning from what it is made to bear in Wesley's tract. Calvin takes for granted that all are "corrupt," and justly exposed to Divine wrath; whereas he is quoted as teaching that men are devoted to death without any respect to their deserts. "We teach," adds Calvin, "nothing but that God has always been at liberty to bestow his grace on whom he chooses." But the very fact of his bestowing

*grace*, supposes the recipients to be undeserving, or deserving of death. By wresting a sentence or part of a sentence out of its connection, the Bible can be made to teach Atheism.

XI. (Book 3, chap. 23, sec. 6.) "God of his own good pleasure ordains that many should be born, who are from the womb doomed to inevitable damnation." The original Latin of this last phrase is "certo morti," which every school boy knows to mean "certain death," and is a very different thing from "inevitable damnation." An event which is infallibly foreknown, is "certain;" but as it respects the agents in its accomplishment, it may not be "inevitable;" that is, they may bring it about in the exercise of perfect freedom of choice, and may act otherwise if they choose so to act; although it is infallibly foreknown how they will choose to act. Besides, if it be true, as Wesley says, that "God foreappoints or predestinates all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, according to his foreknowledge of all their works, from the foundation of the world"—"if (from eternity) he refuses or reprobates all disobedient unbelievers, as such, to damnation, how does this differ from "dooming them to certain death from the womb?" "Can you split this hair?"

XII. (Book 3, chap. 24, sec. 12.) "God has his judgments toward the reprobates, whereby he executes his decree concerning them." (In other words, "he refuses or reprobates all disobedient unbelievers, as such, to damnation.") As many therefore as he created to live miserably and then perish everlasting, these, that they may be brought to the end for which they were created, he sometimes deprives of the possibility ("opportunity"—*Allen*) of hearing the word, and at other times, by the preaching thereof, blinds and stupefies them the more." The first important inquiry, in order to a right understanding of this passage, is, what did Calvin mean by man being "created for a certain end?" If it can be shown that he employs language equally strong, almost the very same terms, in reference to ALL, both elect and reprobate, the force of the objection will be done away. Well, look at Book 2, chap. 16, sec. 3. "In respect of our corrupt nature, and the succeeding depravity of our lives, WE ARE ALL really offensive to God, guilty in his sight, and BORN TO THE DAMNATION OF HELL!" The meaning evidently is, that men without exception (one only excepted), are justly exposed to that awful doom, sin having been *permitted* to enter the world, "and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." That God oftentimes "deprives men of the opportunity of hearing the gospel;" that he sometimes "removes the candlestick out of his place" (Rev. 2:5), in just punishment for misimprovement

of past privileges, we did not suppose was denied by any Christian; nor that, for the same reason, he sometimes permits the gospel to become a savor of death unto death, so as "to blind and stupefy the more." Do Methodists deny this? If any thing further need be said to explain the extract from Calvin, we refer to the section before quoted for the following: "For notwithstanding we are sinners *through our own fault*, yet we are still his creatures; notwithstanding we have *brought death upon ourselves*, yet HE HAD CREATED us for life."

XIII. (Book 3, chap. 24, sec. 13.) "He calls to them, that they may be more deaf; he kindles a light, that they may be more blind; he brings his doctrine to them, that they may be more ignorant," &c. In this passage Calvin is expounding Isaiah 6 : 9, 10—"Go and tell this people (saith God to the prophet), Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. *Make* the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; *lest* they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." See also Mark 4 : 12; Luke 8 : 10; John 12 : 40. If Calvin has erred in the use of language, he is certainly in very good company. But the tract represents him as intending to convey the idea that God by direct and positive influence upon the minds of the wicked, "hardens, blinds and stupefies" their souls in sin, so that he is the author of their wickedness. But he himself elsewhere interprets his language to mean, "the righteous judgment of God," or "the righteous vengeance of God, in abandoning the hearts of the stubborn and rebellious to Satan, to be confirmed in obstinacy." But Dr. W. Fisk, speaking in the name of the General Conference, says: "God blinds men and hardens their hearts *judicially*, as a just punishment for their abuse of their agency." Disc. p. 9. Speaking of Satan, Calvin observes: "He being naturally wicked, has not the least inclination toward obedience to the Divine will, but is wholly bent on insolence and rebellion. It therefore arises from himself and his wickedness that he opposes God—but since he holds him tied and bound with the bridle of his power, he executes only those things which are Divinely permitted; and thus whether he will or not, he *obeys* his Creator, being constrained to fulfill any service to which he impels him." Book 1, chap. 14, sec. 17. "They (the wicked) can lay no blame upon God, for they find in themselves nothing but evil; and in him only a legitimate use of their wickedness." Chap. 17, sec. 5. "This exception must always be made, that the *cause* of sin, whose roots perpetually dwell in the sinner himself, *does not arise from God*." Com. on Rom. 1 : 24.

XIV. (Book 1, chap. 17, sec. 5.) "Thieves, murderers and other malefactors, are God's instruments which he uses to execute what he hath decreed in himself." The design of this extract is to convict Calvin of teaching that "God by his present irresistible power and will, is the author of those actions which are sins, and of the sins themselves." "I admit," says Calvin, "that thieves, homicides, and other malefactors, are instruments of Divine Providence, whom the Lord uses for the execution of the judgments which he hath appointed." By examining the scope of the passage, it will be found that the design of Calvin was *directly the opposite* of that which Wesley charges upon him. "Persons," he says, "inconsiderately and erroneously ascribe all past events to the absolute providence of God." "Since neither thefts, nor adulteries, nor homicides, are perpetrated without the intervention of the Divine will, 'why,' they ask, 'shall a homicide be punished for having slain him whose life the Lord had terminated? If all such characters are subservient to the Divine will, why shall they be punished?'" "But I deny," replies Calvin, "that they serve the Divine will. For we cannot say that he who is influenced by a wicked heart, acts in obedience to God." "But it is said, if he would not permit it, we should not do it. This I grant. But do we perform evil actions with the design of pleasing him? We precipitate ourselves into them," &c. Is this the same as saying, "men commit sinful actions by the present irresistible power and will of God?" Calvin is speaking of the "legitimate use" which God makes of his unholy creatures, and not at all of his irresistible power in causing their actions. "So when the matter and guilt of evil reside in a bad man, why should God be supposed to contract any defilement, *if he uses* his service according to his own pleasure;" in other words, if he "makes his wrath to praise him," &c. The use which the author of the tract makes of Calvin's language, "can hardly be reconciled with a guileless Christianity."

XV. (Book 1, chap. 17, sec. 11.) "The devil and wicked men are so held in on every side by the hand of God, that they cannot conceive, or contrive, or execute any mischief any further than God himself doth not permit only, but command. Nor are they only held in fetters, but compelled also as with a bridle to perform obedience to those commands." This is given as a Calvinistic answer to the question, "How does God *make* angels and men sin?" and is designed to convict Calvin and Calvinists of holding that "God procures adultery, cursings, lyings, and by his working on the hearts of the wicked, *bends* and stirs them to do evil." But the author of "the Institutes" is grossly

slandered in this representation. It is remarkable that the Socinians, Papists and Pelagians of Turretine's day, employed the *same passage* to bring odium upon Calvin and his theological sentiments. Turretine replies that it was cited *dishonestly* ('mala fide'), "and contrary to the mind of the author." "For the scope of the passage is to fortify the minds of the pious against fear and anxiety, inasmuch as they know that the devil and wicked men are not permitted to roam without restraint, but are under the government and direction of Divine Providence." Calvin has no reference at all to the *cause* of sin, but is speaking of the *limits* which God in his providence sets to the rage and malice of the wicked; and thence he derives a topic of consolation to the pious, "when they recollect that the devil and the whole army of the wicked are so restrained by Divine power, that they can neither conceive of any hostility against us, nor after having conceived it, form a plan for its accomplishment, nor even move a finger toward the execution of such plan, any further than he hath permitted and even commanded them. They are not only bound by his chain, but compelled to do him service." Is this the same as saying that "God bends and stirs them to commit adulteries, cursings, lyings?"

But it is proper to inquire, What is the meaning of Calvin, when he represents Satan and wicked men as so controlled and restrained by Divine power, as to do what God not only permits, but *commands*. He doubtless refers to such cases as that of Job. God said, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power." This was said to Satan, in answer to his insolent challenge, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Put forth thy hand, &c. and he will curse thee to thy face." And the pious sufferer himself ascribes his affliction not to Satan, but to God. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," &c. And again, "the Lord said unto Satan, Behold *he* is in thine hand, but save his life." Chap. 2: 6. "Even the devil himself," remarks Calvin, "dared not to attempt any thing against Job, without his permission and command." (Book 1, chap. 16, sec. 7.) The conduct of Shimei in cursing David is another example. "So let him curse," said the afflicted monarch, "because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." 2 Sam. 16: 10, 11. "When he confesses Shimei's maledictions to proceed from the Divine command," remarks Calvin, "he by no means commends his obedience as fulfilling a *Divine precept*; but acknowledging his tongue as the scourge of God, he patiently submits to the chastisement. Let it be remembered that whilst God, by means of the impious, fulfills his secret decrees, they are not excusable as though they were obedi-

ent to his precepts, which they wantonly and intentionally violate.” (Book 1, chap. 18, sec. 4.) “Augustine somewhere makes the following correct distinction: that they sin proceeds from themselves; that in sinning they perform this or that particular action, is from the power of God, who divideth the darkness according to his pleasure.” (Book 2, chap. 4, sec. 4.) Is this the same as saying, God *makes* angels and men sin! Is it consistent with truth and righteousness to charge Calvin with teaching that “God makes men and angels sin by his present irresistible power?” “Oh, shame, where is thy blush!”

To fasten the most impious sentiments upon Calvinists, the “Dialogue” next adduces several references to Dr. Twisse, who was the honored Moderator of the Westminster Assembly, as follows:

I. “All things come to pass by the *efficacious and irresistible* will of God.” But this was originally the charge of Arminius against Calvinism, “*efficaci Dei voluntate, et cui resisti nequeat omnia evenire,*” not the language of Twisse. It is true, Dr. Twisse professes his willingness to adopt this language with certain explanations, the design and purport of which may be learned from his definition of the Divine will or decree—“*Propositum Dei, ut faciat vel permittat aliquid;*” that is, “*the purpose of God to do or permit anything.*” Would not Christian men be ashamed of such perversion of the sentiments of any author?

II. (Vindiciæ Graciæ, pars 3, p. 19.) “It is impossible anything should ever be done but that to which God impels the will of man.” Dr. T. defines the will of God to be “his purpose to do or *permit* any thing.” He does not admit that the Divine will (*voluntas Dei*) is necessarily *efficient*, in the sense of being the *cause* of all events; but he asserts merely that nothing can come to pass without the will (either efficacious or permissive) of God. Dr. T. also takes much pains to show that the Divine will does not interfere with the perfect freedom of men in any of their moral actions. “*Ego constanter nego,*” says he, “*energeticum Dei decretum, quicquam præjudicare libertati creaturæ, sed potius stabilire et corroborare.*” In connection with Wesley’s extract, Dr. Twisse also largely explains the distinction between what is physical in moral action, and what is moral, “*bonum aut malum.*” Of the act, considered as physical, he admits that God is the author, “for in him we live, and move, and have our being.” But this is another and a very different thing from “impelling” the will of man to wickedness, which he utterly disclaims and strenuously denies to be a part of his scheme, as will more fully appear under the next reference. This distinction will also explain what Dr. T. means

by saying "God is the author of that action which is sinful," &c. He is the author of the action (physically considered), but not the author of that which is sinful in the action. And Wesley, as published by the Conference, says the same thing: "God produces the *action* which is *sinful*. It is his *work* and his *will*. And yet the *sinfulness* of the action is neither his *work* nor *will*."\* Thus Twisse and Wesley agree.

III. (*Vindiciae*, pars 3, p. 22.) "God necessitates them only to the act of sin, not to the deformity of sin." This is not a fair translation of any passage we have been able to find. And the latter part of the professed quotation, "when God makes angels or men sin," &c. we are persuaded is a gross misrepresentation. "Quid quod hodie," says Twisse, "satis constat inter theologos, impossibile esse quicquam fieri, cuius auctor non sit Deus, *quoad substantiam actus*. Neque minus luculentum est *fieri non posse* ut Deus sit auctor malitiae aut peccati, *qua peccatum est*." That is, "It is satisfactorily proved among theologians of the present day, that nothing can take place of which God is not the author, as respects the substance of the act. Nor is it less evident that it *cannot be* that God should be the *author of evil or sin*, as respects its moral turpitude." Is this the same as to say, "God makes angels and men sin!" And in regard to the views of Dr. Twisse on the subject of necessity, the following are his own words: "Whereas we see some things come to pass necessarily, some contingently, so God hath ordained that all things shall come to pass: but necessary things necessarily, and contingent things contingently, that is, *avoidably*, and with a possibility of not coming to pass—for every university scholar knows this to be the notion of contingency." Is this equivalent to saying that "all things come to pass by the efficacious and irresistible will of God?"

IV. Piscator is next misrepresented in this Arminian "Dialogue," as follows: "God made Adam and Eve for this very purpose, that they might be tempted and led into sin; and by force of his decree it could not otherwise be but they must sin." "The reprobates more especially, who were *predestinated to damnation*," &c. "We neither can do more good than we do, nor less evil than we do: because God from eternity has precisely ordained that both the good and the evil should be so done." One part of these extracts, which we have put in *italics*, reminds us of Wesley's "horrible" decree of reprobation, viz. "God predestinates or foreappoints all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, according to his foreknowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world." The writings of Piscator referred to, we

\* *Original Sin*, part 3, sec. 7. *Misc. Works*, vol. ii.

have not been able to procure, but the following extract from his commentary on Acts 2: 23, will exhibit his real sentiments: “*Impiorum scelera pendent a decreto Dei, quia Deus decrevit permittere Satanae, ut eos ad scelera impellat. Nec Deus malitiam instillet, nec illi respi- ciant ad voluntatem Dei, sed ad explendum libidines suas, idque contra expressa interdicta Dei.*” That is, “The wicked actions of impious men depend upon the Divine decree; because God has *decreed to permit Satan to instigate them to deeds of crime.* Neither does God instil evil into their minds, nor do *they* have respect to the Divine will, but to the fulfillment of their evil desires and lusts, and that contrary to his express prohibition.” Is this the same as, “God procures adultery, cursings, lyings,” and “by force of his decree it could not otherwise be but they must sin?” Oh shame!

V. Zanchius is represented as teaching that “God’s first constitution was that some should be destined to eternal ruin; and to this end their sins were ordained, and denial of grace in order to their sins.” But there is no such passage in the section of the works of Zanchius referred to in the tract; and the accuracy and fairness of the extract may be learned from the following, which are the express words of that author: “*Deus, ut quotidie permittit tam pios quam impios labi in peccata; sic quoque ab eterno decrevit ut omnes peccare permetteret.* Quare non falso dictum universos homines eo fuisse ordinatos, ut permitterentur peccare;” that is “God, as he daily *permits* the good as well as the wicked to fall into sin, so also from eternity decreed to *permit* all men to sin. Wherefore it is correctly said that all men were so far the objects of ordination, that they might be *permitted* to sin.”

VI. Zanchius (De natura Dei, pp. 553, 554) is next quoted as follows: “Both the reprobate and the elect were foreordained to sin, as sin, that the glory of God might be declared thereby.” We have already shown that this author taught directly the reverse of the sentiment charged against him. Hear him still further: “*Deus ut in nemine, autor est peccati, quatenus peccatum est; ita neminem ad peccatum quatenus peccatum est, admittendum predestinavit.* Nam odit peccatum Deus, ut peccatum est. Ac proinde ad illud quatenus tale est, neminem dicendus predestinasse,” &c. In these extracts the author asserts, directly in the face of Wesley’s quotation, that God does *not* foreordain sin, as sin!! The following passages are from his treatise on “Absolute Predestination,” translated by Toplady: “By the purpose or decree of God, we mean his determinate counsel whereby he did from all eternity preordain whatever he should do, or *would permit*

to be done in time." "Predestination, as regards the reprobate, is that eternal, most holy, sovereign and immutable act of God's will, whereby he hath determined to leave (or permit) some men to perish in their sins, and to be justly punished for them." "God does not (as we are slanderously reported to affirm) compel the wicked to sin, as the rider spurs on an unwilling horse. God only says in effect that tremendous word, *LET THEM ALONE.*" "'Tis most certainly his will to permit sin, but he cannot be himself the author of it." "He alone is entitled to the name of the true God, who governs all things, and without whose will (efficient or permissive) nothing can be done." "From what has been said," continues Zanchius, "it follows that Augustine, Luther, Bucer, and other learned divines, are not to be blamed for asserting that God may in some sense be said to will the being and commission of sin. For was this contrary to his determining *will of permission*, either he would not be omnipotent, or sin could have no place." "No one can deny that God permits sin; but he neither permits it ignorantly nor unwillingly; therefore knowingly and willingly. Luther steadfastly maintains this in his book, 'De Servo Arbitrio,' (The will a slave). However it should be carefully noticed, 1st. That God's permission of sin does not arise from his taking delight in it. Sin, as sin, is the abominable thing that his soul hateth. 2. That God's free and voluntary permission of sin, lays no man under any forcible or compulsive necessity of committing it. Nor is he in the proper sense accessory to it, but only remotely and negatively so, inasmuch as he could, if he pleased, absolutely prevent it." In view of these extracts, we leave the reader to decide whether Zanchius has been fairly dealt with by Wesley and his Arminian followers.

VII. Peter Martyr (Comment. in Rom. pp. 36-413) comes next, as follows: "God supplies wicked men with opportunities of sinning, and inclines their hearts thereto. He blinds, deceives and seduces them. He, by his working on their hearts, bends and stirs them to do evil." Now with this compare, or rather *contrast* the following: "God doth not properly stir up man unto sin; but yet he useth the sins of wicked men, and also guideth them, lest they should pass beyond their bounds." "The defect, which properly is sin, proceedeth not of God; but the action, which is a natural thing, wherein the defect sticketh, cannot be drawn forth but by the common influence of God." Is this the same as to say, "God, by his working on their hearts, bends and stirs them to evil," &c.? Our quotations are from his "Common Places." His Commentary on Romans, as also the works of Zuinglie on "Providence," we have not been able to procure. But from the

specimens which have passed before us, we may readily suppose they have not been handled more fairly than the others.

VIII. We cannot close the discussion, without noticing the fact that, besides the instrumentality of their Tract Society, the Sabbath school is made to contribute to the same unhallowed enterprise. In No. 32, p. 96, of the "Methodist Sunday School and Youth's Library," they state the doctrine of Predestination as follows: "That God has by an eternal and unchangeable decree, predestinated to eternal damnation by far the greater part of mankind, and that absolutely, without any respect to their works, but only for the showing of the glory of his justice. And that for the bringing this about, he hath appointed these miserable souls *necessarily* to walk in their wicked ways, that so his justice may lay hold of them." To those who have read the foregoing Letters, and the previous parts of this Appendix, we need not say that this is not the doctrine taught in the Presbyterian Confession, and by our approved writers. The minister who should dare broach such a sentiment in the Presbyterian church, would be brought to trial for heresy and impiety. The author of the Sunday school book puts the passage in quotation marks; but except by such unfair and dishonorable treatment as we have already exposed, we challenge the preachers to produce such a passage from any of our approved authors.

To fasten the impression upon the minds of the young and unsuspecting that this is a true exhibition of the doctrine, they are presented with the usual array of references to Calvin and others. And lest the point and direction of the whole should be misunderstood, the Presbyterian Confession of Faith comes in for its share of perversion and misrepresentation. We have a repetition of Dr. Fisk's unrighteous quotation of chap. 3, sec. 5: "Chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, without any foresight of faith and good works, *as conditions or causes moving him thereto.*" The clause in *italics*, Dr. Fisk and the Sunday school book both carefully omit, for a very obvious reason. "The phrases, 'eternal election' and 'eternal decree of election,'" remarks Watson, "can in common sense mean only an eternal purpose to elect or choose out of the world, and sanctify in time by the Spirit and blood of Christ." "This is a doctrine which no one will contend with them." Very well. Is it supposed then that this eternal purpose "to choose and sanctify" was founded on a foresight of faith and good works; in other words, on a foresight of sanctification? That is, that God foresaw the sanctification of certain persons, and then purposed to choose and sanctify them? Truly, it is a useless kind of election this, to purpose to sanctify those whom he foresaw to be previously sanctified!

Again: "In quoting chap. 3, sec. 7, of our Confession, this Sabbath school volume suppresses the clause which we *italicize*, as follows: "The rest of mankind, God was pleased for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain to dishonor and wrath, *for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.*"

Other equally humiliating examples might be adduced from this volume of instruction for youth, of the *strange methods* adopted by some professedly Christian men, to promote Christianity. We can only say, whether these things be the alphabet or the higher branches of "sinless perfection," "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united!"

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## APPENDIX II.

### THE HEATHEN WORLD—ITS STATE AND PROSPECTS.

THIS is the subject of the VIIth chapter of the "Objections to Calvinism." As this topic did not properly fall under any of the preceding heads, we append a few strictures here.

1. The Presbyterian Confession (chap. 10, sec. 4) teaches that men "cannot be saved in any *other way* than by truly coming to Christ; though they be never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess." Or as otherwise expressed (chap. 1), "The light of nature and the works of creation and Providence, \* \* \* leave men inexcusable, \* \* \* but are *not sufficient* to give that knowledge of God and of his will which is *necessary to salvation.*" Such we suppose to be the broad ground of our common Christianity. The opposite is Deism. We can hardly imagine that Arminians design to sympathize with infidels.

2. But while our Confession, in the passages referred to, speaks of the *ordinary* dealings of the Judge of the whole earth toward his fallen creatures, and represents the revealed "knowledge of God and his will" as "*necessary to salvation*" (for if there be any *other way*, why did Christ suffer the unspeakable agonies of the cross), these passages of course have no reference to infants, and adults who are idiots. Nor does our Confession teach that there are no cases of *extraordinary* application of saving grace to the souls of those adults who have never heard of the Saviour. Calvinists indulge the pleasing hope, that especially in the last struggle, some of the heathen may be thus

*extraordinarily* enlightened and saved. It must be admitted; however, that the Scriptures say very little on this subject; and here they are closely imitated by our standards.

It is not true, therefore, that "Presbyterians believe in the inevitable damnation of the *whole heathen world*."<sup>\*</sup> Ridgely is an accredited authority, and was certainly a Calvinist, yet these are his words: "We know not when, to whom, or by what means God may reveal Christ to those who sit in darkness. \* \* \* As for the possibility of his revealing Christ to those who do not sit under the sound of the gospel, we will not deny it." Again: "Others not willing, with the Deists, to set aside the *necessity* of Divine Revelation, have supposed that God may lead many of the heathen into the knowledge of Christ, before they go out of the world, by some *secret methods* not to be discerned by us."<sup>†</sup> This, he says, was Dr. Watts' judgment, and with this sentiment he appears to accord.

3. No person of common sense has ever questioned the following statement of Ridgely: "The heathen shall not be condemned for *not believing* in Christ, of whom they never heard." When, therefore, Messrs. Foster and Simpson say, "If a heathen may justly be damned for *not having faith* in Christ, of whom he never heard," &c. &c. their eloquence "wastes its sweetness on the desert air!"

Laying out of view entirely the millions of infant and imbecile heathen, who doubtless experience the saving benefits of the infinite sacrifice of Calvary, though in an *extraordinary* manner—the Calvinist bases his expectation of the salvation of a part of the adult heathen world upon grounds altogether different from those alleged by Arminians. The Calvinist founds his hope of their salvation on the Divine *mercy*—the Arminian founds *his* upon the *justice* of God. That this is the true difference we proceed to prove.

4. "Are the heathen all necessarily damned," \* \* \* say Foster and Simpson, "because they did not live up to the light they had?" But can this be shown, that no heathen ever acted according to *his best light*?<sup>‡</sup> Or as it is otherwise expressed—"Are those comprehended among the perishing, who do *the best they can* according to *the limited light they enjoy*?" But do these authors really suppose that there is such a class of persons in heathen lands? Where is the *Christian* who has the presumption to claim that "he *always* lives up to his best light"—"that he *always does the best he can*!" Such a person would be a bright specimen of "sinless perfection," and would be hard to find among the heathen; since he is "*a rare bird*" even

\* Objections, p. 201.    † Body of Divinity, vol. ii. p. 490.    ‡ Objections, p. 205.

under all the influences of the gospel! If this therefore be the foundation of the Arminian belief that the heathen are saved without the gospel, it is a sandy one. It is assuredly not the Christian foundation, which is Christ and Him crucified—not “doing the best we can.” “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”—“not of works lest any man should boast.” “There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ.” Indeed if “doing the best we can” will secure the salvation of the soul, it remains to be shown that there was any necessity for the Saviour to suffer and die—since men might have done “the best they could” as well without, as *with* a Saviour. Will it be replied, that through his sufferings and death the heathen without the gospel, receive grace and strength? Even granting the truth of the sentiment (which to say the least, is exceedingly doubtful), is it not an admitted principle that obligation increases in proportion as grace and strength are increased; that duty is in the ratio of privilege and opportunity, and that to whom much is given, of him will much be required?” How then can the death of Christ aid the heathen to “do the best he can,” since in proportion as it furnishes strength, it adds to his obligations? Truly, if doing “the best they can according to the light they enjoy” be the condition of salvation, it would seem that the less light the better, because the less their duty and the more easy to comply with its requirements. Indeed the idea of Christ by his atonement communicating grace and strength to the heathen to “do the best he can,” is intrinsically absurd. Who ever speaks in this way of matters of ordinary life—for example, who would speak of communicating strength to an infant to walk as soon or as fast as it can; or to a man to leap as high as he can? It involves this contradiction, that it first supposes the *ability* to do a certain thing, and then in the communication of additional strength, implies an *inability* to do the same thing.

5. With the limitations now stated, let us look at the testimony of the Holy Scriptures on this subject. Do they teach that *ordinarily* salvation may be secured without the preaching, hearing and reception of the gospel?

(i.) Listen to the Apostle Paul in reply to this inquiry. Rom. 10 : 13-15. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?” Salvation is bestowed upon

"whosoever shall *call upon* the name of the Lord" (Jesus). But they alone can "call on him" who "believe" in him: "but how shall they *believe* in him of whom THEY HAVE NOT HEARD?" How is it possible in stronger and more emphatic terms, to assert the necessity that the gospel should be *heard*, in order to be believed; or that *faith*, whether in Jew or heathen, civilized or uncivilized, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." That, therefore, by which "faith cometh," and without which the Spirit of God demands, "how shall they believe and be saved?" must needs be essential to salvation. This view of the subject is confirmed by the great commission of the risen Saviour, "Go preach the gospel to every creature: He that believeth shall be saved," &c.; thus distinctly recognizing the truth, that in order to faith or believing in Christ, the gospel must be preached and heard. Nor is the force of this argument evaded by alleging that it appears to exclude reading the Scriptures, and scriptural tracts from the class of means by which "faith cometh." Preaching and hearing the gospel were the almost exclusive means in primitive times, when as yet copies of the Scriptures were very scarce and difficult of access. Since, therefore, the Saviour's command, "Go preach the gospel," did not exclude, but rather embraced the other appropriate methods of bringing the gospel in *direct contact with the soul*; so, for the same reason, the argument of Paul must be regarded as equally comprehensive. The great truth, however, is equally established in both cases, viz. that in order to faith and salvation, the gospel must be exhibited, and brought to bear in its redeeming and sanctifying power, upon the lost soul.

(ii.) The same truth is taught in Rom. 2:12. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also *perish* without law." To sin without law is, if we mistake not, almost universally understood by Arminians themselves, to mean, to sin without the knowledge of revealed religion. The Apostle is speaking of "the Gentiles which have not the law," and which "have the work of the law written in their hearts," "their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing" them in their conduct. Now, says Paul, as many of the heathen as have sinned against the law of conscience, without the knowledge of revealed religion, "**SHALL PERISH.**" In the same connection of argument, he tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," including both Jews and Gentiles; and so far is he from finding room for a class of persons who are saved by doing "the best they can," that he speaks of "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that *believe*; for there

*is no difference:*" and again the question returns, "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

(iii.) A third proof of the perishing condition of the heathen is derived from the views which the early converts from heathenism were taught to entertain of their previous state and prospects. "Wherefore," says Paul to the Ephesian Christians, "remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh who are called uncircumcision," &c. "that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. 2 : 11, 12. Here is an inspired description of the condition of the heathen without the gospel. We have no reason to believe that the Ephesian converts had all been of the most abandoned and degraded *cast*, or that their character had differed materially from that of the mass of the Gentile world; yet of these persons, without any exception, the heathen state is pronounced by Inspiration to have been *Christless* and *hopeless*. If the Apostle Paul had entertained the Arminian notions of Messrs. Foster and Simpson, his discourse would probably have been something like the following: "Dear brethren, remember the estate from which you have been transferred. It is true that *some* of you were in a very bad condition; and I don't wonder at it, for you neglected to improve the light (darkness? Eph. 6 : 12, Col. 1 : 13), which you enjoyed: but thanks be to God, or to yourselves, there were some of you *who were doing the best you could* according to the limited light (darkness? Eph. 5 : 11, Thess. 5 : 5) you enjoyed; and to say that you were 'without God' (original, atheists,) would be exceedingly 'repulsive and not calculated to do any good;' and to affirm that you had 'NO HOPE' of salvation would be 'offensive'—'an assertion of very doubtful character.' Indeed, to be plain with you, brethren, to be 'without Christ,' without a true knowledge and an experimental acquaintance with Christianity and its great Author, is an evil as regards this life; but as regards your prospects for eternal happiness, if you only 'do the best you can,' to be 'without Christ' is a very small disadvantage, if indeed it be any disadvantage at all. For 'to whom little is given, of him little will be required.'"

We will not pursue the subject farther. When our Arminian friends publish their next book against Calvinism, it would add much to its value, if they would endeavor to understand the subject before they put pen to paper. It is a great pity that so much eloquent writing, especially in this chapter on "the Heathen World"—such powerful appeals and overwhelming outbursts—"fiendish cruelty"—

“unconscious babe damned”—“insatiable jaws”—“spirit shivers”—“soul mutinies”—“shrouds the universe”—“monster of cruelty”—“Moloch”—“damnation a million fold”—“deeper, hotter, more awful hell”—“devouring abyss”—“devouring crater”—“cover the heavens with dismay”—“horrid, horrid,” &c. &c.; it is a pity, we repeat, that such fine composition should be entirely lost. It may be all “strictly logical,” as Bishop Simpson would say; but we Calvinists are so unfortunate as to be unable to perceive it.

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NOTE.—In our Letter XVII. p. 276, the meeting houses, parsonages and other property controlled by the traveling preachers, are said to have been estimated in 1843 at from *four to five millions of dollars*. It was added that now (1860) the same property is worth probably not less than *ten millions*. This estimate, however, is much too low. In the Address of the Bishops to the General Conference, in session at Buffalo, the value of “the churches and parsonages” alone, is estimated at *twenty-one millions and nearly a quarter*—being an *increase in two years*, “of the estimated value of church property, \$3,341,624.”

“The Western Book Concern” reports *sales of books* for four years ending January 21, 1860, amounting to over *one million one hundred and twenty-seven thousand dollars*. What were the actual *profits* on these books we are not informed. But the gross *profits* of their periodicals published at Cincinnati, St. Louis and Chicago, for four years, are set down at *eighty-nine thousand six hundred dollars*.

From these facts, some idea may be formed of the annual profits accruing at New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, &c.

